1 September 2025

[Date of this note is unclear; it was appended, with a note-break, to the last day of August notes, but the images show drawings dated 1 September]

School of Fontainebleau in the Met: Design with river god and putti carrying the symbols of François I

I drew it today after drawing Matisse’s Poésie fireplace mural, trying to see if the Matisse tensile-energy stays in my line after I leave him.

What it alerted me to was the distance--a great one--that needs to be bridged in order to bring Matissean contour into actual conversation, actual dialogue, actual relation with things like verticals, rather than just striking a non-relation with the straightedges, as in my river god drawing here. If I can achieve this conversation, then I will be doing exactly what I want to be doing: Making Matisse meet Mondrian. So then I set about trying to stage just that. I am trying this, first, by a combination of things I am drawing out of Matisse himself: the size-modulation of a progression of ovoids, which I figured out with my now-maybe-finished (but not very satisfactorily) primary-color still life Matisse, on the one hand; and on the other hand, the audacious move of structuring a balanced asymmetry around a near-median--which, incidentally, Mondrian also did with great emphasis during what Bois calls his “classical” neo-plastic period--which comes to me from the Poésie mural. So here is my plan:

Somewhat limitingly, I am still deriving my palette straight from the Matisse in question, as a way of performing my acknowledgment that I am not yet really stepping beyond the realm of copy; and yet, if I succeed, I will be playing Matisse’s black green red peach magenta blue in the precise way in which Mondrian played his red yellow blue white black gray, and that is truly something, to me.

4 September 2025

Yesterday I went to the Getty, and had what I think was an unusually worthwhile day in material terms, not just my dandyish seeking-out of the highest pleasure Los Angeles can afford on my every Wednesday off (which is, each time, to visit the library and the paintings up there). I drew studies of many sculptures and paintings, the three Maillols most of all, and felt that I had Matisse in my hand when, sometimes after finishing a closer and more direct and slower study, I turned right away to more decisive, more synecdochal arabesques of the same view of the same mass.

Upon stepping off the tram up from parking, I also had the following idea, which still brings joy to me. As yet I have no intention to practice sculpture--I just have no investment in it, no expertise, and much of the particularity of my understanding of Painting as a discipline stakes the value of one's practice precisely on such invested (here an echo of the Medieval investiture) expertise--and these things I sketched, as conceived, are reliefs, properly speaking, anyway--but it's rare that an idea that discovers itself to me has such a feeling of obviousness, naturalness, worthwhileness, at once.

On the way to the museum, and away from it, I listened to Modiano's Danseuse, and loved every second of its narration; my pleasure is aside from these words here.

I am not sure whether it was on the way to the museum or on the way away from it--I think it was the latter, on the way to Nala's to build a bookshelf there, as I wound through the heavily wooded part of Beverly Hills along Sunset--but I conceived of, or, rather, tried several ways, one among them foremost, to conceive of painting as something that can happen in a time signature, such as 4/4 or waltz time or even two beats to a measure. That one among them--and this is by no means the exclusive interpretation--is this: That a painting such as this first one, below (that I began a few days ago, taking Matisse's Poésie mural as its departure-grounds), would be naturally correspondent to a two-beat measure; that something like the Bathers by a River or the Barnes mural show a way that a canvas might beat a 4/4 rhythm (I think, perhaps more than this time signature itself, of a certain metaphoric use thereof that I cannot now place; my mind went first to Finnegan's Barbarian Days, and next to the closing lines of A River Runs Through It; I know the latter contains such a use, but I'm not positive it's the one I'm thinking of; the rare effective Scullys, those Harvard pictures with more overt and robust optical activity than the flabbier things he's made ever since, might, after all, be just the ones I'm thinking of--in Bowes one day I noted a piece of writing about them that might contain exactly the metaphor in question); that there's something particular, too, to be found in threefold compositions, of which, off the top of my head, I think Matisse's Luxe II offers an example.

(I can count, but there’s something fourfold here which is palpable from a level deeper than the “three-panel” shape of the space)

It first gives pause, and then a sense of great promise, to think of the absolute intractability of trying to transpose this mode of analysis onto Mondrian.

And even back with Matisse, fascinating things come into reach right there where this evanescent mode of sight encounters ambiguity on its own terms--that is, its own blind spot, a very particular ambiguity proper to it. For example, this painting (Large red interior, which I know chiefly from the cover of one of Aragon’s two collected volumes on the painter) might have come to mind as a paragon for painting in 2/4 time; and yet, if you proceed from the inevitable starting point (the two inset rectangles) in an oscillating vibration-walk into the painting, first outward-upward to the two actual haves of the painting (as defined by the central or near-central black plumb-line vertical, defined, though, subtly enough that this coarsest-grain division comes not first to the viewer; here, my way of looking as Elderfieldian--I insist in paying homage to him even when so much of his writing, even about Matisse, falls flat to my ears, all for that one essay on Bonnard which I pivotally encountered while eating alone in Casper dining hall) and next much, much deeper into it, registering, successively and with loopings-back, across, in some order, the paired pets, the paired table still-lifes, the paired lemons--but, then--is there a third lemon? Was the left pet a pelt rug? And if I’d tried to take another step in, and pair the vases in the still lifes, the left one checks, but the right one has not two (though I’d be forgiven for counting them thus on my first eye-flick), nor three (though I indeed counted them thus on my second eye-flick, but four, and now that I count four, I ask, why am I counting just vases and excluding the (paired) plates, or the lemons, etc.

I won’t trace a walk through this one so painfully heavy-handedly, but

The Piano Lesson strikes me now as owing much of its impossible to pinpoint (impossible to decompose into discrete elements whose balance could then be easily accounted) harmony into a oneness that is, equally, multiplicity, but in any case no easier to call “twofold” than “threefold” or “fourfold” or anything else--but, come to think of it, this way that I am describing its self-balance is reminding me of the golden section; I really did realize this as I typed, and in making it explicit to myself recalled that someone (it may even have been Elderfield) mentioned that the golden section occupied Matisse at one time, a time which may well have been that of this painting, I remember not.

6 September 2025

I wrote that I failed, but then I threw all of this up onto one of my largest panels anyway.

Here are the paintings to which I made reference:

And a polyreference to some vague aggregate of these.

But I’m terribly saddened by what I did in the subsequent hours. I cannot suppress the overwhelming impression that my brushwork is indelibly marked by what Mondrian called the “tragic”: That they are not aesthetically justified, that they are not coordinated or oriented toward any redeeming end. I wish I had made these same colored forms by other means, e.g. by knifing them in: I recall with a sense of regret, regret coming from a touching admiration for the figure depicted at left below, that somewhere it was written that Matisse “determinedly” (if not this adverb exactly, it was its quality that was invoked) laying down shaped areas of color with a palette knife (Or was it that he was mixing colors on his palette, with the palette knife? I don’t actually know whether Matisse ever actually used a palette knife to spread paint on a surface, even though this was the impression I came under when I read those words, whatever they were, somewhere).

10 September 2025

I have come to the library this time with the explicit intention to escape, to flee and to dodge. Guilt from which I cannot repent; the offense is silence, and still I cannot break it.

I am not sure whom I belong to, whether I belong to anyone, whether Bella belongs to me. Not sure, no longer sure. I cried when I left the museum, or, more specifically, my eyes and nose moistened, a lump in my throat causing me to bow my head, when I parted from the portrait of Mme. Brunet (which is no portrait of her; I’ve seen her photograph, and even if she was wrong to reject the portrait she was right that it lacks a resemblance). I am no longer certain of any belonging; in its place, I cling only to my melodrama, even in its obvious self-caricature, even in its performativity, because some how these insincerities don’t undercut what is essential about it, to me, which has more to do with the macaron on which I staked my life in Beverly Hills, once, in January it may have been, we were in the purgatory of lodging at the beginning of 2024, and my life has been spoiling, going stale, in the nearly two years I’ve spent in Los Angeles since then.

19 September 2025

A couple of days ago I had a string of thoughts that led to the prospect of achieving portraiture--not something I've ever sought, not something I went looking for, but maybe I have it--within my restretched armatures, via certain extrapolations I read out of Modigliani. Not having anyone to portray, I first sketched out how I would reproduce in this manner the portrait of Mme. Brunet. The lines and shapes I put down reminded me of Raphael Egil's very recent series of heads of Marcel Proust, and at this I was well pleased.

Then, yesterday, I thought how much would be accomplished if I made a picture of Pope Benedict XVI. How much that one picture would say for me, say about me, say for me. And should I add to this figure, to say even more, also Leo XIII, Ezra Pound, Jean-Luc Godard, Walter Benjamin, Pierre Klossowski, Robert de Montesquiou; Heidegger and Le Corbusier might be a bridge too far; neither Matisse nor Mondrian, neither Balthus nor Hantaï, so that it is no question of models nor of establishing the lineaments and immediacies of my own tradition, but rather of painting men, certain men, painting them in the rough hand of my restretching, and from that flatness accessing the discomfort of the immense depth proper to each of them, as Velázquez helped Manet to do, nightblack ground and deft touch, Spanish drama and legerdemain.

But after turning this over in my head--compelling as it was, the image of Pope Benedict XVI, the author of my Eschatology, scholar with a voice that captures what was most important in Heidegger and even in Rilke, that mind-turning contact with the origin--I let it fall away. And then, this morning, I wondered if my painting of heads might not be better suited to the repeated depiction of Ludovic Nemo and his horse-dealer uncles, for various of whom all of the above (variously) and many others besides (particularly Ludovic, who has more need of angels) can serve as triangulations.

22 September 2025

In each of the last two days, I have come to tears over Aznavour's La bohème.

I have three separate independent desires--independent, too, of the few things actually occupying me in my thought about my re-stretching paintings. I want to be able to paint each of the three following

color chords.

The first is simply that of my study after Manet, the deux bocks in the hand of the serveuse.

The second is an Hantaïan chromaticism like this one: It's Bia Easter, and it's also Goethe, but not by any means a logical deduction from Goethe--it takes all of Meurice-era Hantaï (Meun, later Meun, as his children grew up), to put this much light and life into color.

Third is less definite still. It is related to, but not reducible to, "Stein-basic" color, which is by now an idea at once too vague and altogether too specific. I thought I could locate it in an "Opaque Landscape" painting by Grotjahn (upon looking, the one pasted below was the closest that I could find, and it was farther from it than I'd hoped; it's missing the red, which in my head is the dominant color, but only barely; the red in question could be found also, I think, in Lieberman, but is also satisfactorily provided by the second image, below, a detail excerpted from a different Grotjahn, one which for its part is not at all what I'm talking about, made completely different by the electric-Murnau (Kandinsky's Murnau, not the director; I could equally have said Basel-Kirchner) of its blue). I also thought, for half an instant, that my failed Matisse-window painting got close to it; but I knew this was not really the case at all, and that, in fact, the "pink angels" painting obliquely visible to that painting's right, in this photo, has more usefulness toward getting to where I am trying to go here, despite nominally missing even more components of the chord in question.

It's that the red in the immediately above needs to be set off against gray-white-black, I think, rather against a spectrum of blues. Or: Somehow these blues are the wrong ones, and rule out this chord from

being the one I seek.

27 September 2025

Rereading these words from Georges Didi-Huberman's contribution to the 2022 FLV Hantaï catalogue, it struck me that they could well be speaking of certain things that I have read into Lucy Bull's paintings. Of all the threads extending forward in time from Surrealism, there is one direction which passes through psychedelia, remains submerged through (and thus survives unscathed) the wave of the 60s, has more to say to Michaux than it has to say to the Grateful Dead, though, if I one time made too much of the latter connection, I do not now think it's without interest. Here Didi-Huberman might be said to speak of a psychedelic experience, but only if the term is taken in a sense more ontological than cultural. "La couleur n'existe pas, en ce sens qu'elle n'est pas une, ni jamais toute. Les couleurs, elles, existent en ce sens qu'elles se différencient, dialoguent entre elles, se confrontent, s'embrassent, se confondent, s'échappent d'ici et reviennent plus tard, car elles ne tiennent jamais tout à fait en place. Les couleurs s'effrangent, se divisent ou se démultiplient. Elles éclatent ou se replient, même dans ce qu'on appelle un tableau monochrome. Les couleurs ont été enfouies, les couleurs naissent et renaissent, les couleurs se soulèvent, s'enfuient. Elles pâlissent quelquefois, ou bien s'embrasent, ou bien s'enterrent, ou bien s'envolent. Nos yeux quelquefois s'en troublent : ce que nous voyons devient flou, nous ne savons plus ce qui se passe, c'est juste moiré, versicolore, mouvementé comme un ciel d'orage. Nous n'avons pas compris que nous pleurions déjà devant un bouquet de bleus."

I have written at several somewhat distant points about Lucy Bull's paintings; rather than recover those fragments, I'll clip the one I now think is most relevant from the press release of her 2024 exhibition at David Kordansky. I was touched by this piece of writing, against all odds. I read parts of it while I walked through the exhibition, and as I was about to exit the completely empty gallery, I saw the artist and the dealer seated on the bench outside the door, talking quietly to each other. I wondered what they might be saying. Here is the line from the press release that, I still remember, somehow seemed to me to be speaking a new and real language, absurd though this now sounds. "Her dedication to courting the unknown, as well as her ability to cultivate a personal and flexible vocabulary with broad metaphorical resonance, make her a notable representative of artistic legacies in which abstraction and visionary states play

foundational roles.” What did I hear in it? Something Stein-basic, that I know; how can I hear it again? Who else can speak this to me?

In the last words of this clipping from Didi-Huberman, “un bouquet de bleus” (figured loaded far past saturation by his 2013 essay for the Pompidou), I realize that the Bull painting which steps forth in my memory is not, in fact, any of the paintings I saw that day at Kordansky; nor is it the one I saw at the DMA, the first one of hers I’d seen, which drew me all the way in and immediately informed me that she was doing something different, something real, something, on a personal aside, that afforded a rare contact with the microscale fixations (an extreme extension of the importance I ascribe to scaling of phenomenological attention in painting in general, from Duchamp’s inframince and led by the hand of Elderfield’s Bonnard upward through scales that traverse and finally transcend the rectangle’s limits) that have for so long now been of uncompromising importance to me. It is not even the painting that I imagined when, at wrist-burning length, alongside Peter and Max, I painted PVA onto the massive sheet strung up in the middle of our shop. It’s the light in the back of El Prado, all blue, which I was looking at when midnight made me 24. And because of what birthdays reanimate--not just in their own bizarre way that they have for me, but, with all the gravity and sincerity of the first espresso come-up of the morning, where everything reemerges into (anamnesiac, Proustian) consciousness, of which I am deprived on the majority of these days by the demand of labor that doesn’t quite cover rent, with all this gravity that is still the closest I get to Hantaï’s wordless wide-eyed suffocation that embodies (enhabitizes?) weeping as a more bone-bare proper mourning of life itself (and the death which scans it, time and its loss and the search for it), also from every angle of approach to birthdays spanning the spectrum of credit and discredit, from Proust through psychoanalysis all the way down through transcendental meditation to Lennon’s primal-scream quack. So, to finish with a figure of this Beckett’s-Proust time-regained rememoration that I’ve been reaching towards edgewise throughout, here is another clipping from the same 2022 Didi-Huberman essay, its very end: “On pourrait ainsi regarder les Tabulas de Simon Hantaï : comme des plans d’anamnèse. Des surfaces de couleurs – c’est-à-dire de temps – enfouies, puis dépliées, nées, soulevées, s’ouvrant à nous.”

bottom

19 October 2025

I continue to fast from words by circumstance and by choice. Is there then, now, more substance-mist condensed in moments of gleaming light

when the semi-automatic working memory of sentence-formation isn't even sufficient to pile out what comes mystically before my mind? Just as likely as not.

In any case that moment feels just as redemptive as it ever has, even if I could just as easily let the new distance banalize it.

This is what it was this morning:

Mandore
Mandore (jodhpur)
Santal connecting the two
We have so far, like Baugin, an almost-complete "senses" allegory, whose closure id like to break in honor of the non-numerability of sense itself
Mme Brunet, repainted in seamless sfumato, is angel? Or Cecilia? She, token of haeccity / particularity (in a sense adjacent to Jesus's historical reality), is crucial to the painting's ontology which is to be something new built on what I've gleaned of Mallarmé's and de Vinci's.
Sense: Recent realization of world vs phantasmagoria essential difference by which being-in-the-world is rendered, finally, Cézanne-type, adaequately specific

(In the car on the way to church:)
First, that the entity linkage I just began, which so far is basically self-sufficient for a painting already, is contiguous, if not smoothly, with that of Ludovic's world.
That Ludovic, and not the Cecilia-Madame-Brunet figure, is to facially derive from Leonardo-Luini: Leonardo of the Rocks Madonna's angel (of the Louvre version), not the drawing for it; and Luini in his particular Leonardeschismo, which is, or which begins with, the otherworldly facial trope that he endlessly repeats, and the otherworldly extreme of the relieva sfumata (my coinage), which he takes all the way down into darkness and all the way up into full gesso-reflective brightness, as does the Christ child of the Louvre Rocks Madonna with his flesh's dimples, which I will someday also try to copy. For Luini, there is also to be said, Leonardesco near-monochrome spread of earth tones accented by a gorgeous red block (that the Pala Raimondi has always meant to me), accented also by a blue from time to time (which ultramarine-and-azurite the surface of the lago could also be). (And does it snow on the lake? I tried to find out, but couldn't.)
But anyway, it is the space of that particular relieva, the relieva sfumata intensissima, that goes all the way down and all the way up, which is to say all the way back and all the way out--that's the space for my figures, a space which is also to be marked by the Proust-Chardin communication of objects, where each inflects and is inflected by all its neighbors, bearing in some way their reflection or a transference of attributes, which amounts, on the whole, to a

transfiguration of the ensemble by mutual cross-pollination (here, Proust's but also Bataille's, Benjamin's, Didi-Huberman's, Hantaï's flowers: which is both a matter of the microbiology of spores and all palynological declensions, and also a matter of the physics and metaphysics of light, which is as controversial in its history as is embryology (with the Stoic account, not as history-origin but as a waypoint important for its filamentary liquidity; and thence to Lucretius and to others which Klossowski will probably have enumerated somewhere; and forward from these dark mists on up perhaps most importantly through Proust's color threads, which I realized, last night, must crucially be relating to Chardin's mist-based paint-hand, the hand which expresses his physics, his metaphysics (which is not to derealize or to set apart his ontology: I remain, as ever, strictly in the realm of the real, the concreteness of Baudelaire-abstraction, as always).

It's 9:02, so I have to be abbreviatory with the last points here. First, there is under the sign of Kissowski both Lipp and Longchamp. Longchamp adds (as did--and not separately--Degas, most important infusion into my bloodstream to have happened at the Musée d'Orsay this time) to the existing horse-net of Ludovic.

Lipp, with what I called (for lack of a better term--this didn't satisfy me then, either) dark magic when I tasted those potatoes (in the butter, which is, properly, a philtre if not an elixir; just because it congeals doesn't preclude its alchemical activation: if anything, like freezing a gamete or--I cross myself--an embryo, the congelation enacts a planar shift that disorients all anew) and that veal ("dark magic" just being shorthand for an entire Klossowskian web of arts that projects through Bataille and Huysmans far into the most distant reaches of obscurity, which I need a better, and even more than demonological, name for): Veal, which I link, now, of a moment, to the eye of the ass which Watteau painted (this ass and the veal are to be added to the horse as beasts present in my peinture, though they are not to be as major as the horse, and are to check each other as a balance): I can take the actual eye, this ass's actual form in the Pierrot painting, and build it out into a cow-calf, sensitizing thereby Lipp's veal and activating thereby Lipp in its Klossowskian aspect, and no other, first, which I will then build out further until it becomes also its Nahmad aspect by such means as (including but not limited to) the almost Bonnardian (that café with the reflections) play of brass (or is it just false-gilt, which I imagine as brass by a simple phonetic contamination from "brasserie"?) and glimmer that Zac or Phoebe's picture captured.

That's all for now. All of this is Proust-Moreauvian in the filamentary linkage of elements, which is accretive, but in a parallel, but reciprocal, movement, checking the accretion impulse, also, crucially, a matter of intensely patterned intrication, a crystalline interlocking which slows where (là où) accretion accelerates.

(Added after mass:) First, that I want to put Watteau's Diana into the Thousand Steps topos, that I made a note about a while back,

one morning at work (something about Arcadia, maybe; I don't quite remember): I think those two, Diana and Thousand Steps, go together (in that if I were to paint something in Watteau's hand, the lieu of his Diana or of his Cythère, that it would be this beach). If there are to be palms there, they should be Leonardo's: Both the Rocks one (?) and the Adoration one (these mean peace, Bramly insists, part of a greater (Gothic?) and almost self-sufficient botanical-semiological narrative), brought together in a single panel. So many of Leonardo's figures are implicated in complicated filiations. But to my knowledge, these filiations rarely present two (or even more) of their moments in a single panel. For more of what I mean by such a filiation, see the non-simple relation that the head of a woman which I copied in silverpoint has with the Louvre Madonna of the Rocks (or the London one, for that matter; il s'agit de the even more stretched distance that the latter relation involves). And as a second example, the relation that la scapigliata has with any subsequently or prior painted head that it has a resemblance to. Nagel, for all of his frustrating mannerisms, points to something that, with a little bit of generosity, I may take to be this same thing that I'm talking about now.

And I think that that figure (his Diana), its pose, could be something that I would want Bella to sit for, without being a painting of Bella, just being a mist-infusion after the fashion of how I've come to see copying (studying) generally, whether it be after Matisse or after Leonardo. I think that's right. I think that's more right than, for example, having Bella sit for, the Madame Brunet Cecilia Mallarmé angel (for complicated reasons); the way I'm thinking of it now is that those two charged poles ought to be held apart for now, not without the possibility of their re-merger down the line, but, if this re-merger come to pass, then that it be constituted as such by the pulling-apart or capacitance that I am asserting on the present time horizon, sort of in a similar manner to the separation of the waters in that early Pound poem or in Genesis.

That was the first thing.

The second thing is that the espresso cup, I still think, ought to be as charged an entity as the horses or the horse-dealing uncles, if not more so: The espresso cup is (I think) the primary example of what an object is to be in this new space that I'm talking about, the da Vinci Chardin space, which in a Chardin-Proustian way is like a chambre, defined by the objects which compose it. The espresso cup may ultimately have less to do with Ashtary as a painter than I once thought; maybe what I've been seeing in Ashtary has more to do with me than it has to do with him, but who's to say.

Now, having returned home and pulled a new cup of espresso from my new grounds which have an aspect I've been craving (in depravation of evanescent it) for more than two weeks now (when I finally got it it made my left eye's lids twitch all through mass), I add:

I am remiss if I don’t begin to make this at least a little bit more real in at least drawings or at least words.

First, the Cecilia, the Mallarmé “Sainte.” Its text, as photographed by me in the convalescent balcony light on 15 October 2025:

Before returning to this text for a third time (the second was this morning), the first thing to note about its particular motion (“dérive”? “Weg” certainly, what Derrida had to say about Heidegger vis-à-vis himself) is that the stained-glass scene is accreted to (possibly?) the glass window of a monstrance (“ostensoir”?), accreted to (possibly? Here my imagination is one or two more steps than usual ahead of an ideal / unreal lockstep with the text) an illumination on a music sheet (a detail of Leonardo’s musician portrait now returns to me without full justification: I paste below), accreted to an actual scene of actual actors whose status, whether performed or painted, is necessarily problematized by these accretions, reduced (transfigured) to just another in their succession, thereby perfected and therefore (now paradoxically) once again privileged (Landy’s minor into the major).

In painting: The surface of painting and vitrail and performance-space and illumination-page can, by certain compositional means, alignments, identifications, structures, textures, be quite effectively simultaneized.

These windows (La trinité, accompagnée par anges musicien(ne)s) are from Saint-Severin, lieu de mémoire first for me and Bella and then, I learned a year later, for Hantaï and Zsuzsa, to which I did not gain entry this time, though I tried.

One more note: It may even have been before I left for Paris that Theo voiced, to me and Joe, his longstanding plan (on hold due to the technical difficulty of the luthier’s craft) (I know now that it was before I left for Paris because when I walked repeatedly past that luthier’s in the 19th I remembered it) to make a two-ended violin (which I thought, then, to compare to the conjuncted cars of Dunham’s painter of cars, but didn’t have the chance, then).

How to paint this thing’s structures and textures? Grünewald, Verrocchio (I think?), Baugin, and van Eyck will make it easy.

Here is where I read about him, with the image it brought me of horsehead and gilt instruments without whose condensing moment I would not have had this succession of gleaming clarities this morning.

I must add van Eyck’s angel musicians with Saint Cecilia:

20 October 2025

I say all this, now, I add all this to the pile of pilings-on pertaining to Ludovic, no longer with any idea preferential to the written vis-à-vis the painted.
“Si j'ai « donné » dans l'intention de revoir au delà de la mort le Guide que j'avais perdu, il se peut que je me sois exclu du même coup de la certitude des choses révolues.” This from the prologue to Klossowski’s Souffleur.

In this Maître, Guide, Lui, I read first several interlocking (better: overleafing) figures from Mallarmé, dont le Maître qui “s’est allé puiser des pleurs au styx” (?). What a task? This, an account of art: always never without these pleurs à puiser?

My grandfather deceased these long years and lost to me long before then by the overlap of the onset of various incapacities and,

conversely, on my part, the slow dawn of lucidity. “Guide” au delà de la mort. And all those much older monks who stand behind Fr. Ambrose (Klossowski was known to frequent the proceedings of the Collège de sociologie in a soutane). Mallarmé, and Léonard: The one ever more hermetic than the other: And all others along whom I’d filiate, and do, ever anew and ever insufficiently (insufficiently as this narrateur, exclu de la certitude): To begin with Hantaï, to proceed down backward alongside his stovetop skin glue preparation, his breathing, what was reported of what was happening in that building in the Cité des fleurs at the time when he presented himself in silence, in absence, to Breton (intersplicing herein my own breathing, of turpenoid’s solution of nameless rotting matters which can all eventually be found in the lump of caput mortuum of unnameable color at the bottom of the silicoil but which, for all that you can hold this lump in your hand, soil your body with it through your pore-breathing skin with it permanently, you shall no more know even one of its contents, those infinite declensions of products from all reaches of the cracked and fume-expiring earth, my toils with marble dust behind a respirator, Lipp’s congelations of mise-en-abymes of countless preformation-generations’ fats lanceted from a duck egg, amounting to like obscurity-mist, unholy or no.

And, besides, what happens on Islay or other outlying reaches of Doggerland? What fights over silted brooks, blood-feuds handed on through filiations of generations that interlace with the history of Kells? At Speyside (?) the peat bears witness to all these overlaid distillates of marrow-cord, of bird-hollow phalange which, more than housed or armatured, was grace once, under sable, under slipped-off sable within emptied gynecea of cyclopean proportion which Moreau spied on those Frankenstein reaches of the north, west of hyperborea, out there on the desolated reaches even under the reign of Solomon, even under the reign of his angelic David accompanied by a Verrocchio-Leonard-Louvre-rocks angel, and even before.

21 October 2025

Among the animals in Ludovic’s world, dogs; primarily unconscionably slender greyhounds, but, setting off against them and mutually exacerbating each other’s qualities, a stout-faced one cocking its head out at the viewer after the manner of Dosso Dossi’s sorceress’s, with eyes far more human even than this one’s, perhaps making that ford at its narrowest point which is a resemblance to the facial structures of certain figures of Botticelli whose canine aspect I’ve long noted.

22 October 2025

“Sodomites: Variations of non-fructiform erotic engagement,” but contrary to expectation it is each time either ambiguous or heterosexual. The overtones range from the vampiric to the sarcophagic, but never a compulsive or appetitive fetishization, always fixated more in a Bataille-Mauss way, like a token, whose charge is all a matter of sublimation into an act which like the Eucharist cannot quite be called a sign.

One walks an extraordinary tightrope in trying to imagine what it may have been to experience every temptation without falling into any sin—Willem Dafoe tried to walk it, once, and may have fallen terribly far to one or the other side, and we are never to know—thus, the words I use to describe an analogical branch off of this Nosadella painting are entirely unavowable, but all they need to do is convey me back to a vision outside of any words: “A glimpse of my lover in full bloom behind my mother’s shoulder while I still sucked at the primordial breast.”

24 October 2025

Notes re capponi Pontormo in Steinberg papers at Getty?

26 October 2026

With hesitation I set to words something that has been happening for a week now, really, but latently since I was in Paris, perhaps latently-latently since before I went:

Without knowing why, I watch as it is Klossowski and Mallarmé who bring me back to Pontormo (via da Vinci, whose sfumato-relieva, even with a Luini cast, will smooth over the stoppage that I ran into when once I tried to put paint on top of a Pontormesque drawing), and, with Pontormo (in whom I am also with Michelangelo, and, in this, I think, because of the novel inter-pittore structure inaugurated by the maniera, I do not violate the dictum, I think it is Cennini's, that one ought to choose one master to drawing-copy, else become distracted), I think I come back too to the imagined way of working for which I enlisted Bella's help to find file folders for my talismanic cabinet, and for which I made those trobata-sorting files--I think.

With Klossowski and Mallarmé I continue to accrue the topoi that (along with a hand, and everything else) I was lacking. They join a by-now sizable--even, for now, sufficient--corpus thereof that I have, behind my own back, as it were, necessarily self-blindfolded (and gagged, and muzzled, with a respirator on), been accruing under the notional heading of "Ludovic's world." It is not all in one place, now; loose ends, stragglers, abound, and will continue to; but I must stop letting that paralyze me.

30 October 2025

Ludovic,

What he eats: Duck, primarily; at times, venison; ritually, the heart of the first deer, the first deer of fellow virgin hunters, and each time anew the first deer of the season

His source of income: Image-selling as a boulot ("high fashion modeling")

What he does: Turns away horse-dealers

In other words he is realized, as is Rilke's ehrwachsene (sp?), by a set (not a series) of gestures, such as steht (sp.?), gang, etc.

2 November 2025

Written in my car after Mass:

“His transalpine eminency

Neither Vrin nor (Droz? Corti?) but a new construction of an emblem according to internal rules

Pico della mirandola
Marcantonio flaminio
Vittoria colonna
Even Jakob boehme and the lineage that intersects Kleist’s circle

Is the book upon which he rests his hand Heidegger’s snow cabin book?

“High but under”: If it is possible to place this portrait in a turmgarret, then it will be done; but “high but under” is also that the perspective situates the viewer at the height of his Pier Maria Rossi III codpiece, which by relation to portraiture conventions is extremely disorienting

He wears Pontormo-leotard tights in a yet-undetermined color

His legs, including a fur (ermine, with an ermine nestled into it, nearly cannibalistically which after the manner of a Steinberg-cited ostentatio genitalium does not obscure, and, inheriting the legs’ proportions from that infant, strikes a tone which is not Lynchian but has a discussion to be carried out with Lynch

The situation of the sitter in picture-space probably needs to draw on my studies in the vein of Modigliani; the head, whose primary model is Ratzinger but to which an identity-obscuring beard is to be added, will have its eyes closed and will be inclined to the side so far as to recall Lewis’s portrait of the sleeping Pound

The biggest question is whether he is a horse dealer, but what is certain is that he is enmeshed in their world, on the one hand, and, on the other, that in his mind is mastered immense brics de materiau (find Hantaï’s phrase distinguishing Nancy and Derrida) which for me

are as glacial and as celestial as the high place behind Saint Anne—an unfathomable mind, surpassing anything that may be called “erudition,” having like Rilke or even the young Catholic Heidegger long since transmigrated to a different realm entirely

I think Klee’s “… mit dem fluegeln” is a necessary referent too

Under a fur (there are to be at least two kinds of fur, one corresponding to the diaphanous veil of a Cantor infant, one over his shoulders; they render each other the more real by the contrast), a vestment of an otherworldly green which might scatter the cardinal-scent but which seals the specificity nevertheless because (I think) it has red and/or violet piping”

And I attach the following images, either re-sought toward this end or, in the case of the last one, from Ciccio, stumbled upon, via August Blum’s post of an image from this exhibition, and recognized, with a great measure of luck, as a solution to a problem that, against the odds (against the sempiternal difficulty of the narrowness of my memory), was still before my mind.

If it be this beard that I take, it is at risk of rendering this image (this Pontormo drawing) too central, because it already feels to me unbearably perfect, barely bearably important to me.

(It was actually Droz I had in mind, not Vrin, seen through the Aldine tradition of such emblems (imprimaturi--what’s the plural of a nominative of a passive a verb?):)

Dürer, for that Pontormo may have known it:

Schongauer?, for the phallus-transference and the silhouette:

Durer, for the codpiece:

Holbein? For the asymmetry in the cloth pattern:

[I append on 6 December 2025: “Freikorperkardinal.” Kirchner in the lakes, but also Kirchner in the regiment baths.]

Akin in status (qualification, setting at a certain removal, yet still avowal) to what I once proposed calling “studies for a re-Symbolist painting,” I think works in which I don’t actually follow the manner of a Pontormo or a Michelangelo, because I do not study originally from the model but rather study after readymade figures of a Pontormo or a Michelangelo and to a greater or lesser extent make modifications, alterations, sutures until I have new figures which are neither new nor old, might be called “performed infusions (of style)” or, better, for the biomedical evocation, “performed transfusions (of style),” or, better still, to avoid a too-direct description, “performed transinfusions (of style),” whereby I am neither active nor idle, because (that is, if) I avow the product as my own, or as much my own as a thing can be, a thing of which I am capable.

For some reason I have been overcome this evening, in the latter part

of my walk, my first in at least three weeks, up to the very top of my mount, and the clouds were rivers, and the grass was radiant green, overcome by the conviction of the idea that I am to expose my paintings absolutely strictly pseudonymously, overcome by the impulse of absolute autocracy vis a vis--what? My image? Not quite; perhaps the rootest impulse fueling the conviction is dissatisfaction with the already unblanked slate.

Why do painters not use pennames, whereas it is so common for writers? I foresee contracts, notarizations, communications in that Swiss-German shorthand.

Still, I want obliteration, effacement even more effective than Caguiat's. No one will know but John, and Joseph etc.; maybe I can beg them to cooperate.

Even the word "Arlington" has to be blotted. But I think "2001" and "Texas" can stay, and even "monastery," but if "Texas" then not "Cistercians."

3 November 2025

So many of these rafts of words or propositions could be lifted, transposed, grafted directly onto my own half-existence.

10 November 2025

Intense desire to go back through more completely the representations of the strands of freedom, and newness and all that ("caffeine") which appeals to me in the most abstract sense, which go under the names of Krebber, Strau, Oehlen, von Bonin, Althoff, Koether, but also, differently, Werner, and so, more simply, Cologne.

Desire to go back through everything more completely, and maybe find the right grain or groove or friction for me to get some momentum, i.e. the right thoughts to think with, or just the right signposts by which to situate what I still think of as my thoughts that I already have, somewhere. (I have to still think of them as such because I am constantly confronted with what appears to me as my current utter and dismaying incapacity to think, to finish sentences, even to have the while-reading sort of ideas that in past years even in my most impotent moments I could at least always muster. Such that

it is not without seriousness, on some real plane, that I broach, recurrently, in my head or aloud, a very real fear that I may already have been for some time developing a kind of brain cancer.)

Desire, more specifically, for “Cologne” now, because, now, and since the recent note regarding it, I have still been thinking of Ludovic Nemo, thinking since then in roughly those same terms, but also, and with the most excitement, through the eyes of (in the voice of, in the twitching manner of*) Robert Walser.**

With full and heartbreaking admission of the extent of the embarrassment proper to my now enactment of acceptance of the fact that the following is all I can manage by way of this “going back through everything more completely” (I can blame my work, yes, and what littleness of what of me remains in the margins and wake of it, but it seems that the discrepancy, the breadth of the shortfall, is such that I need more than that to blame it on, something like brain cancer), here are clipped fragments from the ICA Philadelphia booklet published on the occasion of Make your own life: Arists in and out of Cologne (2006).

“... cameo appearances in front of an Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche boutique” (13): Here I think of Ludovic fetishizing the Saint Laurent slippers that John once talked about, to Georgia Ford, maybe, in a swooning way. (I read already about this happening in the von Bonin MOCA catalogue, about the merry pilgrimage; and the french bulldogs and the boats and catamarans and all the fabrics, too. I thought then, again then, and again later, how much I’d like to be able to use fabrics in ways like how she and Polke did; I took solace then, a week or two ago, as I did several months ago, in an idea that I may someday be able to do something with neoprene that I can get from Alibaba and stretch on aluminum bars. But then I learned last week that neoprene is not archival, for whatever that is worth.)

“Kippenberger’s InputOutput drawings, 1991, while not analytical like Fraser’s work, also present an image of the artist informed or “made” by its encounter with social life. Drawn on restaurant receipts from a Brazilian hotel Kippenberger frequented in the late eighties, these 67 small works on paper depict hastily scrawled apartment floorplans—as if the artist, traveling far from home, was systematically remembering every building he had ever lived in. There is something barely there about these furtive scraps of paper. And yet, their juxtaposition of commercial grid and spontaneous expressive mark speaks volumes. For one, they provide a kind of quiet diary or biography (many bear legible addresses under their floor plans) that joins with the many other examples of self-portraiture or self-assessment in Kippenberger’s work …” (15): These receipts sound lovely; Eyrie Alzate has just had a solo exhibition at the new gallery Diana in Milan (which I just learned about because they did Josef Strau’s most recent show), in which she included a receipt drawing among repetition-formalism-hand-appealing works for which Rivette afforded the structure or the way in (I feel Herrigel here). But the real observation to make via this fragment is that whether the Ludovic endeavor sinks or floats comes down to whether, with that constructed

identity against the backdrop of the current context (whose problems are unique, and deeply related to and deeply different from the problems whose confrontation was the Cologne milieu), whether I can do something that stands on the shoulders of (both relates to and is new with respect to) the Cologne artists that I care about.

This is a John Kelsey quotation; it comes dangerously close, throughout, to saying nothing at all; but still, and even therebecause, it comes dangerously close to articulating the essential allure of the whole Krebber problematic: " … Krebber is first of all something overheard, a rumor—maybe too good to be true. He's a story told by others (Germans, mostly) to each other. The story has no point and no end. It might begin with Krebber eating a beer glass at another painter's in order not to say something about it, or with him suddenly openii instructing his students never to paint again. Krebber is one of
those artists they call an "artist's artist," and when you ask around, his story becomes impossible to extricate from those of the close contemporaries who are somehow or other implicated in his myth (Cosima von Bonin, Josephine Pryde, Albert Ochlen, Jutta Koether, Merlin Carpenter, Charline von Heyl, etc.). When pressed, friends and insiders begrudgingly supply half-answers ("it's a Cologne thing"), as if unwilling or unable to flesh him out in a decisive way. There are moments and contexts, certain jokes, things that are said to be "Krebberesque," the precise weight and thickness of a "legendary" opening night in somebody else's memory. Krebber is like a club you can't get into, until you realize the club was built for you and you only, and maybe you are in it now, trying to describe the view to somebody back in Cologne" (18).

I still feel passed by by Trockel (a Tatol favorite), but here I re-feel (ressentir?) the perhaps permanently looming allure of the mass of my millions-strong words, which I dreamed of transmuting, by way of Ludovic, into something (my "oscillatory work") better than an "artist's book," something stranger than a kunstlerroman too, something which even excels as writing, even while realizing my art which I struggle so shamefully to realize by more direct means.

"[Trockel's] Buchentwürfe (Drafts for Books) -replicas or simulations of artist monographs-show her working in a terrain that is both secondary to and immanent with artistic legitimacy. An artist has made it when he or she has a book, but it is rare for artists to make it with books. It is interesting to compare Trockel's vitrine of "drafts" with Krebber's vitrine of dandies-each sends artistic identity elsewhere, though in a normative sense, female identity is already elsewhere" (21).

"Jutta Koether once remarked to me that Cologne, historically, was distinguished among German cities for three factors: its Catholicism, its Carnival and its role as a media and entertainment capital [How could I, Thomas Worth, I, Ludovic Nemo, imagine wanting to live in another place!]. In ancient times, Cologne was called "Colonia" by the Romans, a northern walled outpost on the Rhine. Still to this day, the city retains a certain Latin feel with its labyrinthine streets,

relaxed social attitudes and multitudinous bars and clubs. Cologne, it could be said, has always been a city where qualities of the self are at a premium—whether this means “losing oneself” in drink or spectacle or “caring for oneself” in religion” (23).

In Simpson’s closing with Lawler and Strau, I first recall that Mads (the New Theater’s musician) made Lawler emblematic of what seems to be his very straightforward but to me endlessly fascinating endeavor to spatialize--i.e., to realize space, by means primarily of repetition and texture. Then, I end up by feeling, for the severalth time, that Strau is after all the artist of all artists ever to whom I am by disposition and in all respects the very closest. “Perhaps, as Gareth James argues elsewhere in this book, there are no viewers or audiences, only receivers and producers— participatory figures in an ongoing struggle over significance and value. Such would seem the case in two final art works, by Louise Lawler and Josef Strau, which directly position the artists as “viewer-producers” of the Cologne scene. Lawler’s Untitled (Martin and Mike), 1992, pictures art's continued fascination with Martin Kippenberger and Mike Kelley (not to mention their historical proximity) in an installation photograph of their work magnified under the crystal dome of a paperweight. Strau’s The Cologne-In-Review-Reading-Lamp, 2006, takes a more complex, totemic form. Made as a type of reading-and-writing lamp, the object suggests those modes of cultural reflection—memory, reviewing the past, writing it and reading it—that are invisible or not to be viewed, but which nonetheless may occur in the warm glow of its light” (26).

Which finally gets me to Strau properly. All I can say is that every word of his “The Non-productive Attitude” is to be hung onto, clung onto; and that what I found myself thinking of most, while reading it, is the necessity to differentiate--to individuate--the Los Angeles of today by means of the exemplum of his individuation of the Cologne of a certain day, But really, this is no the most important thing, I think, at issue in his text: It’s the fresh and frank Marxism that he brings to the endlessly thrilling (thrilling only at / in its mainline) analytic of freedom: He extends the mainline of that analytic by adding himself to it, whereby he joins rare company, which I would name as follows: Duchamp, Godard, Strau. Or something. The stuff now feels to thick and rich for me to do anything; I’m out of the groove that I could not really find.

[* Meant to append the brief Walser line about his personal robustness in “Snowdrops” which made Danny switch from skepticism to pure touching admiration, when I showed it to him yesterday]

[** Meant to append scattered brief Walser lines from “Kleist in Thun” which show his epigonal articulation, there, of the kind of vertigo which I feel particularly marks me, the thinness of being or the shortness of breath (breath of the mind: Spirit), marks me, marks me as a person, marks me for who I am. The voice--Walser’s Kleist’s, Walser’s, Kleist’s--which flutters, flits from plane to plane, makes space uniquely uninhabitable and simultaneously more alluring than ever--that which is the height of its excruciation, this excruciation being nothing other than the essential character of being in the world.]

11 November 2025

Render / rendering / renderer / rending / rend:
A passing idea regarding a recent idea regarding the duck fat at Brasserie Lipp and the possible resonances and narrative exploitations of such an entity, namely alchemical, on the one hand, and on the other speculative-uncanny (thinking of what could realistically be rendered in duck fat, thinking, for some reason, embryologically).
“Rending: Good painting” and “Rendering: True painting,” where “rending” is something pertaining to an authentic participation (from out of my distillates, my mists, my Baudelaire-abstraction, somehow) in a Mondrianian paradigm of good paintings, and “rendering” is something pertaining to the process of distillation itself, not just by the traditional means of life drawing (studies from the nude, more specifically, in the manner of Pontormo (which is to say, and which is also not quite to say, in the maniera of Michelangelo), or after the “revolutionary” practice of studying from the female nude attributed to Raphael and mythologized perfectly in Picasso’s 347 suite), but also by life-intricating procedures, often with privileged etiologies (origin-anecdotes) connecting them to Cologne, thinking first of my talismanic punctuation with the espresso cup and thinking second of something about which I learned only this afternoon, Strau’s use of the tin of a melted mug, in Milan and maybe also in Brussels this year.

Strau: line from press release from Dépendance? Or from Milan? (It came to me as as uniquely brilliant, as uniquely able to generate what I would call appeal or“caffeine” out of thin air, as that one line from a Kordansky press release about Lucy Bull, in which upon

retrospect I was never able to re-trouve (retrieve?) quite the same thing.)

Here is the fragment I was talking about. From Your clouds your hair your laketown, at Dépendance, Brussels: “Strau is known for his evocative, dream-like explorations of urban landscapes and metaphysical themes.” And later: “... Strau’s surreal reflections on clouds, memories, and transformations to the forefront, exploring the interplay of art, reality, and metaphor. … Josef Strau’s work is a unique fusion of auto-fictional narrative and a meticulous approach to materiality, presenting a space where text and object are inextricably entwined.”

But, the main thing: Alchemy, alchemy.The recurrent thought that what is truly distinctive, what is truly worth while, what in all my thought--what in me--is truly worth staking everything upon is my way of looking at the Baudelaire-abstract-real, i.e. a poetics which is both Landy-transifigurative-Mallarméan and also Hantaï-Nancyean, by which language I already mystify--allow me to retread: i.e., to recirculate a phrase onto which I clung ca. 2022, my uniqueness is my way of not seeing as contradictory things which everyone else would see as contradictory (not each time I’ve rehearsed a version of this line in my head recently, but when I type it here just now, I realize for the first time that what it describes may precisely coincide with Reverdy’s definition of the (Surrealist) image). And that all this is best and most truly and most effectively couched in the language of alchemy, always without ever even the slightest hint of mystification therein (despite the allure, and, inevitably eventually, the real value of mystification, of the obscure, which the Symbolists saw clearly (clair-obscur here being not the trite chiaroscuro but rather that strain which is the selfsame core of the tradition of John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, Hildegard von Bingen, Blanchot, and Simon Hantaï)). Strau shoots every time from the hip, and never misses because it really is that simple.

This is by Katharina Hölzl, for It’s a Capriccio at Diana, Milan: “The magic magnetic splatters are made of melted tin mugs and tin sculptures and idols, which can be understood as ruins of a former entity that has changed its aggregate state, or been transformed into a higher composition of metal.” And it goes on, but these next two sentences might be a reading from which I would assert a departure: “They are now placed magnetically on sometimes romantic, sometimes threatening, evil sky canvases that reach out with cloud claws. They are evidence of the redemption from the redemptive drive, which constantly seeks to console or redo the works and deeds of the past.”

But I want to be happy—I do. I want to be happy! I do! I wear my striped shirt, I put it on and I wear it, I drink two whiskey and I walk around the streets in a pattern which, despite my robust figure, I have calculated to minimize chances of coming to bodily harm. (I am fearful by nature, and, besides, perhaps even vulnerable by appearance, despite, as I say, my robust figure.)
Such a voice (to recuperate a notion of the subject under yet another term) makes ("makes": renders) a certain painting: a painting, naturally, of a certain specific kind. A painting that aims—here it all is—to make everything not just better but, finally, good.

Whether by Strau's patient soldering, or by Englander's prayerful study or Rothfeld's clockmaking, of which it is reminiscent; whether by Strau's tin mugs and jewelrymaking, or by Lieberman's coffee services, of which it is reminiscent: a tokenized end, a performative—if trite, still, sincere—exemplary, talismanic, pars-ad-totum ("ad" here in the sense of "unto") intrication of life and art and redemption of all of it thereby.

I could have believed I had written these words myself, most of all in light of the Klossowski-Mallarmé topos-complex of the maître / vieux which I am to make the mouthpiece of every artist who has ever formed me (my everything-eye). They are from the end of Strau's "Tears and New Tears": "I have this very concept for my most unconceptual writing practice, that like the hero of "The Four Nights of a Dreamer" I speak into a recorder my thoughts and lonely meditations while working on my almost alchemist objects. I return to myself as the 14-year-old movie goer and exorcise the scripted spell of the protagonist/to me arch antagonist, the influencer antagonist. I will materialize the script of his unrevealed content of his tape recorder by turning it into my own life's ridiculous facts and revealing them as transcripts as a kind of conceptual excuse!"

I want to paint with my re-folding technique again. But I want to use the edges not with a palette knife, not with scraping, just with a brush and more or less thin washes of color that will dry in one day.

I want to paint on neoprene, even if it is not "archival." I want to mix my substrates, black neoprene primed supersmooth with acrylic gesso, black neoprene primed more or less thinly with marble dust dispersed in rabbit skin glue, white neoprene primed more or less thickly with rabbit skin glue, black and white neoprene primed with PVA, and of course Paris canvas primed with rabbit skin glue, Belgian

linen Grotjahn-primed with PVA, #10 canvas Quarles-primed with PVA.

And it is that I will call all this “the living and the dead.”

I will paint, I will restretch, I will let the plumbline verticals go wobbly as they will with restretching. I will let the washes of color build up, light emerging out of darkness or translucent veils intersecting unto softly dirty Hantaïan muddling. And sometimes I will even draw in silverpoint on panel-backed supersmooth acrylic, but eventually this drawing will tarnish, it will be scuffed by restretching and tracked with staples, it will be partially covered by subsequent glazes of oil, washes of gouache.

Or will I draw, from life or from my vieux (in my own connaissance des textes), really? Or will this just come off as Caguiat, or as de Kooning, or as putting Pontormo into a blender, and why should I care to make such a thing, I should not care to make such a thing. And what are my armatures anyway? Are they the very mechanism of hagiopoiesis, or are they crystalline prisms, or, inverted, are they Ludovic’s room, the one with a window, visited by dealers of horses, inhabited by a nude girl? Even my horti conclusi, and even my John K putti can find their wriggling and twitching way into existence, among these planes, upon these flat surfaces, for all that I say. But of course I haven’t the talent to make this happen, nor even more than tiny sliver-fragments of it. To my credit, I’m not sure who has, anyway.

And even besides, even if I could do all that I say, all this feels like the furthest thing in the world from Cologne, from Strau to whom I have just been singing out my heart with love.

Not that this is valid grounds to fail to get off the starting block. Just that, if I cannot even now answer the question of why I think such a thing, if painted, would be good, then I will not be able to make myself paint it all the long days into view. Witness this the third day in a row--only one of them excusable by the visit of our friend--in which I have not made a drawing after the master of my hand. I was doing well with consistency, by my own paltry standards, but I did not even manage to persist for a week.

There was to me a hint of resemblance, only a passing one, among the threads I schizophrenically flip between. It was this: That in the imagined magnificent patience of my re-folding, there was a glimpse of the same magnificent patience, the near-absurdity, the stoner-adjacent sincere-transcendence-pursuit of a Strau angel-painter with a soldering iron, a Quietzsch brushing in and washing out the gouache, an Englander cutting and stitching bikinis.

Is it there, the resemblance?

With neither fear nor hope (I assert groundlessly; I am full of spe and metu), I posit that there will be resemblance if I proceed into this painting under a sign of “Autofiction from the hand of Ludovic Nemo” or, better, “Scenes from the life of the painter, Ludovic Nemo” or, better, “Confessions of Ludovic Nemo” or, better, “The Autobiography of Ludovic Nemo” (it preserves the structure, as well as the title’s prosody, of the Stein work; the correspondence of my oscillatory other self to her lover is a complication inherent in this structure which feels right and new and perfect to me; and if I

put forth any of my writings under the title “From the notebooks of Ludovic Nemo,” then there will be there, too, another quiet homage to a pillage of the theater of gestures which uniquely gives rise to Ludovic Nemo, namely, the theater where all performed gestures are not performed merely, but instead all act on the real plane, all make real life to happen by their very performance, as in Igitur; and that is how the incongruous term “theater” rests soundly on the shoulders of Stein, there where it was most unexpected …), or, better, …

I have grown optimistic, I grow optimistic: I feel terribly good about what is in my head and is not real. That Ludovic will paint his ducks as they render on a surface marked by the irregular silverpoint grid which recalls the living-on in my mind of that one Ryman drawing that I could not replicate; that the irregular silverpoint grid is both plaid, on the one, literal hand, and, on another, also commensurate with my mathematical drawing by dials and sliders and Pythagorean-Plotinian relationships (Catholic alchemy, really), and, what is rarest, that it affords a founded linkage between my armatures and the drawings I will make on them when I make on them drawings in the maniera of Pontormo, because Pontormo gridded up his drawings, but I cannot do the same quite the same as he did because now the grid is something else entirely than it was to his eyes, now, the grid has to be irregular, now, my silverpoint grid will just be just right to make the transferred drawings sit just right among the armature’s planes and along the armature’s axes and over and under the armature’s ridges upon the drawing’s bed of sanded gesso over neoprene.

12 November 2025

I was about to go to sleep, when I was fondly struck by an image, a version, really, of the canvases on conjugated surfaces which I described yesterday: neoprene, linen, supersmoothed gesso, rabbit skin, plumblined chalk, more rabbit skin or PVA, silverpoint, more gesso, and gesso that I’ve prepared.

I was also thinking, yesterday, that perhaps it is the case that an object--a painting, for example, but really any object--undergoes a certain particular change in the (non-historical) moment when it begins to act alchemically, begins to function on an alchemical plane: It becomes totemic. For example, with a Mallarmé poem, the telltale signs of the accompanying aura can be seen in the urge to talismanically memorize the object, hold it in the mind, turn it over and over, oscillate through its outfanning valences, refract through it whatever new light may come to one’s hand, i.e.--once the poem has begun to act transfiguratively, all these things follow, because that is the aura of the talismanic object--that is, that is the character of the totem. (This term is not at odds with the abiding

Catholicism of my project, a point which I may be able to explain at length later on; for now, suffice it to recall the phrase “Catholic magic” or “Catholic alchemy” from Valerie Keane’s Gaylord press release, which John would not address when I asked him.)

What I was really thinking, yesterday when I say I was thinking of this, is that, prompted by thoughts of Strau’s melting of tin, metallurgy / jewelrymaking, and the role of idols as well as tin mugs among his primary materia, is that the resonance that I feel from such a working calls up to my mind an image which is that of the loosely stretched (roughly wrapped, rather, as though in burlap) extraordinarily elongated stretcher (plank, rather), which Sarah Rapson thickly iced with some sort of plaster or gesso and encrusted with rifts of text and leaned against a wall. For a couple weeks, a study after Hantaï has been similarly leaning against the armoire in my room, to similar effect, for what is at issue here.

My point is that all the things I say above (neoprene, linen, PVA, rabbit skin, supersmooth, aluminum caps and epoxy and key panel) can be perfectly synthesized with such a format as follows: Fragments of armatures with a density and elongation of line (a span, that is) recalling the particular linearity of the Getty villa’s counterparts to the Boscoreale frescoes; and, from among these armatures (two to three of them, identified by starkly diverging sets of variables, which is to say starkly diverging scales and foci etc.), a talismanic espresso cup, at the height of a foot or an ankle or a navel or a shoulder (or at each of these heights, but to varying degrees, at some of them only barely recognizably, i.e. only in false starts of a silverpoint drawing or chalk echoes of a tracing; and at any case only and exactly once in a rather abundantly realized aspect, having manners in common with my studies after Manet’s bocks, and, also, in common with, perhaps, vessels that Pontormo must have painted for his Emmaus, ones which have never individuated themselves to me, indeed I cannot even begin to call them to mind now, I wonder if I’ve ever looked at them at all, though they must be there, on that table, under that eye peering through a triangle from behind the fabric of this world from which behind the flesh depicted below will come for the living and the dead (phrase which I reassert is to be used, to refer, among other things, to the spread of matter which I will assemble, a spread which, in my tonight’s fond imagining, is, like the painting I made months ago with Fontana- and Twombly-era Italians in my mind, mostly drained of non-neutral colors but nevertheless like Hantaï’s lilas shot through precisely therebecause with colors that turn out to be the most beautiful ones, but toward this end much better than that painting--I mean the painting on which I drew a Pontormo putto and a Picasso dancer and compromised the intended effect by doing a poor job with the Grotjahn tears and haloes of color I attempted.

13 November 2025

These are my plans that I make, last thing tonight, for tomorrow; I paste them here because it is not likely I will get to even a reasonable fraction of them today.

14 November 2025

If one good reason for trying to paint everything I will paint through the sieve or crible of an “autobiography of Ludovic Nemo” can be put most vaguely in terms of my interest in sustaining the life of all the animating forces which lay behind the recent wave of interest in the literary form grouped famously inadequately under the label “autofiction,” my vaguely avowed but really real interest in the real & not-exhausted tensions which were activated by the remarkably disparate works known thereby,
then,
perhaps a second good reason can be read into the fact that Huysmans’s des Esseintes was only able to come to life, as it were, i.e. to be what he was for Mallarmé, for Wilde, for everyone on down to Michael Krebber, because of the form Huysmans gave to his content; which is to speak with absurdly inadequate terms, so allow me to rephrase:
In giving us des Esseintes, Huysmans performed a technique akin to that which lies near the heart of cartoons’ appeal according to this reviewer of Cosima von Bonin’s exhibition Songs for Gay Dogs in Flash Art which I listened to last night while driving back from Daphne’s apartment where I met her and Bella for Spanish wine in a stolen or gifted (I don’t know because there’s one of each) Lipp

glass, stout pie, and peppermint bark on the way home from plankmaking in the dark after work: “These cartoon icons were designed to be emotionally expressive, and their global ubiquity gives viewers an immediate point of access. Von Bonin uses these characters (and many more) as blank canvases for feeling: it’s easier to relate to pain and strife when it’s projected onto a Looney Tunes character instead of an actual person. In Open Your Shirt Please (2019), Daffy Duck – famous for his on-screen neurosis and egotism – battles encroaching negative space that threatens to consume him across five velvet-covered panels. He eventually loses the fight to the shadows, resulting in a single all-black rectangle. As Clara Drechsler writes in her essay ‘Demon Clearing Service’ for the exhibition’s catalogue, ‘There’s no one who would rather be Daffy than Cosima. Sadly, the requisite qualities are not sufficiently pronounced in her. But perhaps they do share the same demons.’”

As an aside I note that what I have had in my head as my reason for studying after Ren and Stimpy has much more to do with formalism, with the (implied, but for that no less real) movement of bodies through planes, than with parasocial empathy, or identification, or projection, or whatever concoction thereof is at issue for this reviewer and possibly for von Bonin. But perhaps none of these dimensions can ever have been fully absent.

I just now take the time to put here--and also under “Little guys / Dandy,” and also in my document about the oscillatory work and Ludovic Nemo--what I noted on 7 November 2025 by way of saving several images. (From the last several months there are countless such things that I noted only by the saving of images and never pasted into here.)

Karl Walser, Robert’s older brother (moving slowly to Berlin where Karl already was involved was similar for Robert to what moving to Paris was for Duchamp with respect to Villon and Duchamp-Villon, it seems).

They are suffused, for me, with something that my idea of “dandy” absolutely cannot breathe without. I am of course speaking, here, right around Ludovic Nemo. Anyway:

Even down to the loaded relation to the window, the proto-Kafka uneasiness of the crowding of the flat (these aren't horse-dealers, but they may as well be),

Even--with what feels like the turning of a key, once thought lost, deep under my diaphragm--this image which does not precisely illustrate a dream I once had, maybe five or six years ago, but which captures what beneath the detail was really happening in that dream, if I transpose my own point-of-view into this pierrot, a move which comes by all accounts quite naturally to me.

Several other of his drawings, like this one, make palpable the way my dreams always have a vibratory sort of blur and an unpinnable sense of expansion or slipping at the seams or overlaps between the Merleau-Pontyian planes whose superposition forms a "singular" consciousness-instant-slice.

I regret the liberty of cropping but the immediately above also illustrates the thereabove.
By way of outro: A veritable conjugation of dandiform types.

In the last two days (12 – 13 November 2025), I have struggled to visualize the kind of pictorial space--not Pontormo's, nor da Vinci's, nor John K's, nor Boscoreale's, nor quite the flatbed either--I want for my planks, and more von-Bonin dimensioned canvases, which will affix neoprene and Belgian linen and #10 and skin glue and Rapson-iced gesso etc. Maybe this Altdorfer drawing gives me the most clear-ringing answer I could have hoped for. But it does not resolve--indeed, it re-raises--the question of patina which I discussed with Francisco at Adam Alessi's opening, I having broached the fascinating looseness of the Kirkeby canvases then hanging next door at Werner. There is, afoot, a fetishization of patina; it's in the air, naturally, and has been at least since Michelangelo artificially aged certain of his drawings. But it's not this fetishization comme tel which is of the essence for me, just as it is not any kind of specific semiotic function on the associative-referential plane for which I am insistently interested in folding neoprene into my surfaces. In both cases, I seek something more material, more optical; more aesthetic; more ineffable and more surface-located. It is in both cases a matter of choosing a different syntax rather than a different vocable. I think Strau and von Bonin also make their choices (which may therefore not feel like ordinary choices; they involve at once a hitherto-unheard freedom and a sense of ineluctability, a simultaneity of once-thought incompatibles which is uniquely ecstatic) for the same kind of reason, and that is why the work of each has an effect which is so singular and irreducible to "oh, with this tweed she is signifying class," "with this Bambi she is signifying a gender trope," etc.: It is for her rather a matter of allures and surfaces all her own; and,

likewise, for Strau his tin and his angels are not materials which signify but rather indices which cumulatively, stochastically, even, let us know, perhaps not without outside assistance, which world we are to step into, which plane we are to calibrate our workings and actings and thinkings to, namely the Mallarméan-transfigurative alchemical one.

That there are facts which would cause a sensation of a shaking of the earth--cause, that is, a sense of vertigo--were their hermetic secrecy ever to lapse, this is something whose possibility some have taken to doubting today, permanently foreclosing; but also, and equally vacuously, on a level of the basest sociology, it is something unanimously believed.
Such facts are what is suspended for all eternity in the rendered duck fat which is subsequently fossilized by the same physicochemical conditions which spawned bog butter, conditions now easily reproducible in a laboratory.
I speak of things whose ramifications would be the object of more universal reeling than the whereabouts of the missing panels of the Lamgods, but this, too, has its place in constructing, rung by rung, a ladder of sorts, a ladder of Teilhardian phases, say.
Still, on a low rung of this ladder, the duck fat is eminently porous to scents, even scents lighter than air (as it were), scents of flesh, of a particular flesh, the flesh of a body, the flesh of the God-man or the flesh of a lover, the pheromone-turgid scent of--even more concrete, more particular, than an irreducible and irreplaceable body--a body in a moment of the soul, a moment of transport, the ecstasy of the great or the little death, a moment coinciding with (if not witnessed by, or in any way registered in) a moment of the body.

How have I come here today? I rattle through ideas without the time to test or even to make a note to test them; among these ideas there is at least one which is, for me, almost unspeakably perverse, transgressive maybe even by standards other than my own utterly chaste ones.
On Alibaba I zero in on copper foil (as well neoprene).

Strau has made a point of soldering tin; tin, they say, was for the alchemists the metal of Jupiter, consummate for its malleability and therefore enshrining an inflection point, a maximum of positive slope, say, on the latter from lead to gold.
(Not to discount the emblematic importance of the magnum opus, but I note in passing that, when it comes to alchemy, I am rather more interested in its other subfields, those pertaining to the elixir of life, both for its "what goes by the name of caffeine" pertinence and for the conjugations of visions of utopiae onto which it opens).
I, on the other hand, seek to get my hands on copper for a small handful of reasons.
It is approximately as workable as tin; I believe, therefore, that with epoxy or simple soldering or brazing I could affix such traces of material (or fetish-bearing focus-knots--the espresso cup itself, and any of the countless other things for which that punctum functions talismanically) as will convene, upon my ready surfaces of Dibond, say.
If it can be made to stay perfectly unoxidized or can be converted to full and thorough oxidization, either way, its optical allure seems to me to well-suited among a variegated but by no means omnivorous palette of surfaces, textures, colors, etc. Perhaps not as well-suited as aluminum itself, or tin, but better, I think, than silver or gold--I think, but here I am out beyond my limb.

There are the Etruscan mirrors, including the one in Dallas, which showed Korē by another name, as far as I can reflect now.

Copper: Not an attribute of Kithira, where I still imagine myself one day, but rather (as the name bears clear witness) of the other birthplace or alighting-place of Venus, Cyprus (Paphos, specifically); according to alternate sources, the site flickers among these two islands.

It is therefore that copper came to represent beauty and allure, and is therefore already central, on a significative plane, to any aesthetic endeavor, whose goal can only have been beauty, whether or not this beauty be theologized ("Beauty"), by means of an Aristotelian or Thomistic figuration of transcendentals or otherwise.

Additionally, if not quite distinctly from the immediately above (via the chain beauty / allure / the fallen aspect thereof, vanity) and the further above linkage (on a historical-practical plane) to mirrors, there is made present one of the classical figures for "a painting": the mirror, which, if often underprivileged with respect to the window, has a special place within my own symbology, via Mallarmé. For me, both mirrors and windows are indispensable in the intricate patterning of self-reflexivity (see the Sonnet allégorique de lui-même for these two in proximity, as well as Le vierge, and one of the éventails, etc.) which transmutes base material--a life, and the dross or encountered ingredients which constitute it, from flesh and its constituent tissues and particles on down to things inhabited or inhabituated and thereby patinated and even unto things just found and imminently utilized--into art, redemption.

I have come, there, to a certain terminus. But I was just beginning to trace the contours of those impulses which had been rattling through me as I drank my second espresso cup, beside my armoire.

I shall brook no attenuation of the perversity. I thought to glaze myself with honey, imprint my father of thousands upon a flat and smooth surface, and register the saccharine siccative's form in the negative with an aerosolized chemical which will dry faster than the organic viscous gold; water-soluble, the latter may be easily washed away while the former persists. The lips of a lover, the hand of a maître, can be presenced by the same means.

Perhaps I indulge, thereby, in a too-easy nest of tropes--anthropometries, acheiropoieta, and so forth, more reminscent of university art departments than the real thing--but here, among the tensed disparates that I have been arranging my materials around, the living and the dead I mean, the honey and the fixative seemed to succeed in annealing Ludovic's autobiography (at its most redolent, most charged, most loaded, most direct, most raw--indeed, can a non-pseudonymous artist, even in today's status quo which has amounted to an evaporation of transgression, get away with such infantile scatology masquerading as authenticity?) to the picture plane.

But it cut me all the way to the quick, this idea, because of how it emblematized even an actual personal-historical anecdote, a token divergence (or "perversion"; it is unclear whether the term may be applied, so benign it is; and yet, yes, there must even be a historical term for the perversion likely having appearing in handbooks well-used at the Salpêtrière, and even now, the DSM-5 classifies it under "fetishism" ("use of inanimate objects to gain sexual excitement"), among other paraphilias).

That's that on that.

I was also thinking how later iterations of my planks ought to have their panel's faces made of dibond instead of wood, and the canvas or other textilic substrate incompletely covering the aluminum's surface, such that an espresso cup, a metallic one from Alibaba, can, once bisected on or off the diameter, along with its saucer, have its then-planar face be soldered to the metal. And I thought this bisection can happen on the CAS aluminum saw without too much difficulty. But I wondered how a ceramic espresso cup, like the one whose punctual aspect I also have always admired, could be cut. And I thought that the Baeresque tokenism or totemism or fetishism of such an affixed cup--which, by the way, may remain in contact with its saucer, or may be made to levitate above its saucer (a levitation which may be repeated, even in intersection, especially with the below cross-sectional technique I am about to mention), or may be positioned relative to its saucer in such a way that actually realized (I mean--re-actualizes) these paired objects' spatial relation in the frozen (stilled) (morte) moment of a sip from an espresso cup. And I was thinking also that, Baer aside (under whose sign it seemed to me that, if the espresso cup and saucer were not affixed, centered laterally, onto a small aluminum surface that more or less tightly bounded them,

i.e. was not much more than five or six inches wide and seven or eight inches tall, then they ought to be placed at foot height on a plank-shaped canvas that was perhaps not leaned against the wall--a gesture by now well-worn--but might instead be hung at such a height that its bottom edge would be so low that the espresso cup might still be debased all the way down to the height of a foot or at least an ankle; in arriving to the height of the foot I also considered the da Vincian altitude of the height of the root of the penis, etc., which is actually the juncture from which I proceeded to the proposition about honey), two parallel cuts might be made to the cup and saucer (in metal or ceramic), so that a low-relief sort of cross-section whose profiles are actually curving planes and whose cup-handle would be very nice if cross-cut might be affixed to the picture plane with resonances more uncomfortably parapictorial than simply token-fetishistic as in the affixing of a more object-object (in place of Baer's cigarette, or bottle, or whatever else she had).

For some reason--it is 10 p.m., and we've returned from eating barbecue at S.K. and Fennec's--I am thinking that my planks need to group together in loose sets, particularly if propped against the wall or imperfectly hung (am I just thinking of Rapson?). And I am also thinking that canvases I stretch with neoprene ought to be at least in spirit quite regular--i.e., consistent and normative format (like, say, Strau's tin paintings or certain series of mounted textiles by von Bonin, all in a roughly 4:3 portrait ratio), the neoprene constituting the majority of the set thus constructed (even if exceptions are admitted, thickly iced Belgian linen, say, they must come off as just that--exceptions).

I was also thinking that a series of plank-format works, either propped ones or hung ones (I can think of arguments for each, but perhaps a slightly stronger argument for the former: objecthood and freedom of motion), ought to have just the handle of my aluminum or tin Alibaba espresso cups affixed to nearly the very bottom of their righthand profile (which must, therefore, bare at least a bit of dibond or wood of the strainer, perhaps doing so by means of a homely folding-back not reminiscent of a monstration of the open wound to Thomas or--)

15 November 2025

Scattered notes, all pertaining to Ludovic and his world, which is to say, to my painting. If these cook down into a stereotype rather than

a gnomic quiddity, then all is lost. The line to be drawn is that between Tatol's reading of Hindolo (which--and here is the danger--diverges sharply from my own) and his reading of Marc Kokopeli ("while the combination of a car, leopard, and perfume attempts to be eccentric, it doesn't go beyond the sentimentality of its aesthetics, a nostalgia for European high culture, wine, and decadence, like Fassbinder at his most romantically indulgent, say Veronika Voss or The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant, or more precisely, like someone sharing screenshots of Fassbinder movies on Tumblr," vs. the "elliptical, reticent strangeness" which is always what is good about Kokopeli). An aside on Kokopeli: This line, brought forth in Tatol by his show at Bortolozzi in Germany, I could hold up as a banner, better (because more specific, and therefore more useful to amnesiac brain-cancerous me) than "nec spe, nec metu": "His weird box TVs with transparent screens are still cool but, again, his previous show's flat use of them as screens with bricks lurking inside highlighted their weirdness as objects while using them to animate cartoon dolls is more trivial."

Almost too intimidated to proceed, having, it seems, very likely stereotyped myself in advance with the very same phrase used to distill Hindolo, here are my "scattered notes."

On chocolate (hot chocolate, the fantastically rich kind that they served us at an empty Flore) in Sade, from Barthes's Sade, Fourier, Loyola: "Restorative chocolate: 'Everything is said: Monseigneur, worn out, goes back to bed, his chocolate is prepared for him,' or: 'After his orgy, the King of Sardinia offered me half his chocolate. I accepted, we talked politics. …' Killer chocolate: 'When I have given Monsieur's dear son a good fucking, we will make him have a cup of chocolate in the morning …'" This is the footnote to the following, which I only append in a secondary role to the above, rather than vice versa, because I am more after the quiddity of the chocolate than the formulism of class-distinguishing luxury in conjunction with monstrous enormity: "The libertine diet is both a sign of luxury, without which there can be no liber-tinism, not because luxury is pleasurable "in itself"-the Sadian system is not merely hedonistic -but because the money it takes ensures the division into poor and rich, slaves and masters: "I want always," says Saint-Fond, describing his table fare for Juliette, "the most exquisite dishes, the rarest wines, the most extraordinary game and fruits"; as well as, which is different, a sign of enormity, i.e., monstrosity: Minski, M. de Gernande (the libertine who bleeds his wife every four days), have fabulous meals whose fabulousness (dozens of courses, hundreds of dishes, a dozen bottles of wine, two of liqueurs, ten cups of coffee) attests to the powerful constitution of the libertine body. In addition, food, according to the master, has two functions. On the one hand, it is restorative, it replaces the vast quantities of sperm expended in the libertine's life; few are the parties that are not introduced by a meal and followed by a few "restorative com-forts," chocolates or roasts with Spanish wine. Clairwil, whose debaucheries are gigantesque, follows a "wise" diet: she eats only

boned game and fowl, in disguised form, her regular all-season drink is cold sugar water flavored with twenty drops of lemon essence and two spoonfuls of orange water. On the other hand, and inversely, when administered, food is used to poison or at least to neutralize: stramonium is introduced into Minski's chocolate to put him to sleep, poison into young Rose's and Mme de Bressac's to kill them. A substance either restorative or murderous, Sadian chocolate ends up by functioning as the pure sign of this dual alimentary economy." Still, au-delà of the way in which Barthes necessarily abstracts the functioning of chocolate as a component in a whole whose systemic character really is at the heart of the matter (as with Duchamp's chocolate mill and coffee grinder, talismanic to me once and still), the last word has a duality which retains enough image-force to sit right at the heart of my whole enquête into the elixir side of the alchemical face of the world: "A substance either restorative or murderous, Sadian chocolate ends up by functioning as the pure sign of this dual alimentary economy."

And yet, though I've known, and recently, the quintessence of this chocolate species (at Flore, as I say, which, as with Lipp in Klossowski, though I do compromise my credibility in claiming as much, somehow transcends any question of cool or uncool because it has exited the fabric through the eye of the stereotype itself), the motion-images which actually come with the most force to my mind in trying to say what chocolate can be, edging out--and this is the heart of the issue--the bodily, material chocolate whose "real presence" I have known, are the virally-sourced mousse-slammings that Bella locked in on before our trip and which we never succeeded in arriving to.

So there is chocolate.

Then here is the great dane varietal known as “harlequin.” He and “merle” are known as the most expensive. But I think that Iguazu, a charming dog owned by Harry’s mothers, was a “faun,” and maybe it was just her, but I think that her aspect was the most beautiful and most likely to be associated with Ludovic Nemo.

I began trying to discern among these after failing to locate the book Great Danes, whose title was visible in an image Cosima von Bonin’s installation of her own bookshelf or piles of favorite books at the museum in Luxembourg. The new poodle was much easier to find. The forms it displays on its way to plotting out its vision of excellence are worth retaining.

I have always liked this picture of Michael Krebber.

Next, and not diligently but idly, I collect the utterances of the name in Le Souffleur.

“Alors, ayant quelque répugnance à me mettre en quête de U. et de Raphaël qui devaient se retrouver au Lipp à la même heure à propos de je ne sais quel comité de vigilance démocratique, – désespéré, je rentrai à la maison. La concierge me remit un mot de Merlin, venu dans la matinée, qui disait m'attendre à partir de treize heures à la terrasse du café de la Mairie” (107).

“--Allons, dit-il, je meurs de faim, accompa-gnez-moi au Lipp nous y serons tranquilles avant l'arrivée des autres. On causera à tête reposée et vous téléphonerez à Saint-Gervais. / Nous nous attablâmes dans la salle du fond de la brasserie, d'où l'on pouvait observer les personnes qui entraient” (120).

“Vous mentez, Merlin! dis-je, – et il me sembla que tout

vacillait de nouveau autour de moi — impossible que vous n'ayez pas vu Roberte endormie sur le divan. / Il nia derechef.
A ce moment, le gérant du Lipp me fit savoir que j'aurais la communication avec Saint-Gervais dans les dix minutes qui suivraient. / Mais je voulus changer de place, car pendant que nous parlions de la sorte, je vis entrer K. et U. qui, apercevant Merlin seul à la table que je venais de quitter, s'approchèrent. / K. paraissait ne pouvoir se tenir d'agitation. J'en profitai pour descendre au sous-sol et m'enfermai dans la cabine réservée à l'interurbain. / Au bout du fil, la directrice de l'aérium m'an-nonça que Jérôme était bien arrivé avec son groupe. / — Avec sa mère? demandai-je anxieux. Mais la directrice ne l'avait pas vue. Elle s'informa et, quelques secondes après, me dit qu'une dame avait en effet accompagné Jérôme. Cependant elle ne s'était pas présentée, peut-être était-elle retournée à son hôtel. A l'heure même l'enfant était au réfectoire. On me pria de rappeler dans la soirée. Cette dame devait repasser vers les huit heures. / Remontant du sous-sol, je m'arrêtai en deçà du niveau de la salle et fis signe à Merlin. Il vint se pencher sur la rampe pour m'apprendre que K. cherchait Valentine. Il venait d'avoir une scène affreuse avec elle peu après notre départ. Elle se serait brusquement sauvée de chez lui, il l'aurait filée et, à l'en croire, elle serait allée chez leur commun ami, le docteur Ygdrasil. / A présent, K. voulait me parler. Merlin avait à peine fini de me chuchoter ces renseignements, que K. s'approcha de l'escalier conduisant au sous-sol. Mais tout de suite je redescendis les marches pour me cacher dans une cabine. Merlin ne révéla pas ma présence. Je les entendis échanger quelques mots, puis K. se précipita dans une cabine téléphonique, voisine de la mienne. --Le docteur est là? l'entendis-je crier tant et si bien que je pouvais suivre à peu près la conversation. Sans doute parlait-il à Ygdrasil. --Retiens-la! Enferme-la au besoin, jusqu'à ce que je vienne! / Puis il remonta en hâte. D'abord je n'osais bouger; prudemment, je gravis quelques mar-ches. Merlin, de nouveau seul à notre table, lisait. Alors, de l'étage supérieur de la brasserie, descendant lentement l'escalier, la taille élancée, moulée dans une robe écossaise, la Valentine K. apparut, le visage aux traits d'une régularité péremptoire, jetant des regards furtifs dans la salle du rez-de-chaussée. Puis, ayant repéré Merlin, elle glissa, tel un serpent à sonnettes, et, se penchant vers lui, le fit sursauter littéralement. / Je savais bien que si je restais là, si à son tour elle me voyait, quelque chose allait se produire, sans commune mesure avec ce que les uns et les autres commentaient alors fiévreusement. Je ne la voyais encore que de dos. Elle se redressa et, tout en parlant à Merlin qui s'était levé et qui, lui, me voyait en train de la guetter, elle se rapprocha de la rampe du sous-sol. Mais le courage m'abandonna et, pour la troisième fois, je me réfugiai au sous-sol. J'eus l'idée de rentrer dans la cabine et de feindre une conversation au téléphone, gardant la porte entrouverte. « Allô! -- fis-je pendant qu'elle descendait les marches, - Allô! Madame Lacase est-elle revenue à l'aérium? » La Valentine K. s'enferma dans un W.-C., en ressortit au bout de quelques secondes, et s'attarda devant le

lavabo. Mais presque aussitôt L'appareil téléphonique, jusque-là sans courant, retentit furieusement. D'en haut, le gérant me criait : « Monsieur Lacase, on vous demande de Saint-Gervais! » Et je décrochai en tremblant. --« Allô! Allô! » - Et c'était le même timbre de voix qui, le matin au Beaujolais, avait tinté à mon oreille, et, plus tard, à la Cour de Rohan : -- « Allò, allô... c'est toi, Théodore? » - « Mais oui, dis-je... c'est vraiment toi, Roberte? » - « Tout va bien ici, fit la voix; quoi de nouveau depuis ce matin?... » - « Nous en reparlerons à ton retour... reviens vitel » - « A samedi!... » -- « Jérôme est-il content?... » Mais déjà la voix avait repris: « Allô, allô!... c'est toi, Théo-dore?...» et comme je répétais: « Mais oui, Roberte, tu ne m'entends pas? », la voix continua sans s'interrompre : « Tout va bien ici; quoi de nouveau depuis ce matin?» Je ne voulus pas raccrocher tout de suite, mais j'écoutais encore : --« A samedi! » Je me tus, et la même voix reprenait : « Allô, allô! c'est toi Théodore? Tout va bien ici, quoi de nouveau…' / Derrière moi, cependant, je percevais le bruit des talons de la Valentine K., s avançant, se reculant face à la glace. Et, ayant ouvert tout grand la porte, je la vis, son abondante chevelure brune retombée jusqu'aux reins, ses longs doigts laçant des nattes, une épingle à cheveux entre les lèvres. Et comme je la dépassais, elle tourna la tête de mon côté, et, de son œil bleu sous le sourcil surbaissé, me lança un simple sourire.
Puis, se regardant de nouveau dans la glace, elle se couronna de ses nattes" (126 - 130).

"Le vieillard ouvrit tout grand les yeux et cessa de sourire. / Mais à peine avais-je prononcé ces mots que je crus m'être trompé. La même impression ressentie trois jours auparavant chez les K. ou chez Lipp se reproduisait ici, chez nous. Au premier coup d'oeil, c'était elle... et cependant, outre qu'elle portait ce soir-là une robe d'été fort légère et seyante, claire et semée de dessins de fleurs, et qu'elle était coiffée d'une manière insolite pour Roberte, elle avait je ne sais quoi de sombre dans ses yeux gris, à la fois agressif et farouche, un pli plus accusé au coin de ses lèvres arquées, comme ombrées d'un léger duvet, et la régularité de ses traits, la fermeté du menton contribuaient à lui donner une expression dure, même vorace, que variaient étrangement les mouvements invitants de ses bras nus, les gestes de ses mains, froissant, entre ses longs doigts, une paire de gants blancs, dissimulant et exhibant tour à tour ses ongles; d'où quelque chose d'impersonnellement lascif, de vicieux presque, dont l'allure empruntée m'échappait encore. Une transformation avait eu lieu assez inquiétante pour que je cessasse peu à peu de la reconnaitre, à mesure que montait en moi une curiosité à la fois anxieuse et avide" (230 - 231).

I have found a couple of TV documentaries which include footage from the kitchen of Brasserie Lipp, which will be important to me.

I am curious how they serve espresso, but it is not a sort of a holy grail for me, because they do not serve it at breakfast.

Thought tonight--in the shower, which is, maddeningly, the only time when these paintings seem like a good idea--after descending from the hilltop where I walked in the rain with a little umbrella that kept turning inside out and popping its water in rings of droplets all around me, that the right way to seal these several things together is to hold any pictorializing (whether in an aggregation of silverpoint copies after studies after Pontormo, or ever-restarted studies of espresso cups after the incandescent sprezzatura-core manner of certain instants of Manet) at a certain distance, but not categorically, by keeping the moments of silverpoint drawing clustered around foot height, or keeping the stretches of full-palette oil paint sequestered within relatively narrow shores among taller expanses of aluminum, of wood, of linen, of neoprene; and--here is what really felt right--that the way that my kurrent will be made present is by using the shop's drill press to write certain short phrases on pieces of wood or aluminum which can then be pressed into lumps of wax-infused rendered duck fat (I read that it was by inmixing wax that Beuys turned his rendered fat into quite standard and easy objects to conserve). Something like Rilke's epitaph (Rose …), Mallarmé's note for the candied oranges, or Ludovic's "Chaque jour, le matin …," or something even simply and more multivalent, like "Love," or ("Liebe,"?), after some sequence of which impressions the impressor may be affixed to a panel of its own in a punctum which feels, to me, adequate, of a piece with a persistent interest or turning-over of various conjugations of ideas of redemption, transfiguration, transmogrification, phase change, the moment of parallax when a new plane of action is inaugurated, whose reality is always somehow flicker-marked, if not dubious then at least not unanimous.

16 November 2025

Look at the shirt Josef Strau is wearing to lecture to the Kunstverein Düsseldorf! He of the Burberry coat--or does he not share it with his "White Nights" narrator?--which he wears in precisely the same way.

During mass I thought of painting--superposing, even--two flowers on the left-hand side, along the edge, near but not at the vertical midpoint, and stretching some length along the height of, a plank-like canvas which would be primed supersmooth only at its patch--supersmoothed, that is, and then subsequently skin-glued, which I predict will neutralize the deadness texture of the plastic gesso, locking these opposites in harmony (copper-style), what I mean by “the living and the dead.”

Not just any flowers--the lily of the Annunciation, and the lotus of Salomé, “the sceptre of Isis, the tall lotus, sacred flower of Egypt and India.” Il s’agit de relever la Madonna-Hure-Komplex (here I find an urge to invoke Derrida’s suggested translation of aufhebung), such that it is to describe not the condition of woman but that of being-in-the-world: grace, allure, excelsis and le pire. But how to enact this aufhebung? Does the hand of Ludovic reach for the flowers, or does an espresso cup handle somehow affix to them, or does a halved espresso cup in Ludovic’s implicit hand superpose itself over the stems’ point of intersection, or--?

Not just any Annunciation, not just any Salomé: Huysmans’s Moreau’s Salomé, and the annunciation-lily which I saw in a sad little piece of algorithmic jetsam which showed images of sights of genuine beauty under the half-nonsensical caption “the real beauty of Japanese Catholicism.”

And the kurrent stamping this one: The Magnificat? Or something written on a book in a different Annunciation? Mary’s words in van Eyck’s Annunciation are, perfectly, already reversed. (I’ve been thinking to leave my kurrent-imprints in their right-to-left read: the coup de grace to their legibility, the echo of da Vinci, the echo of languages so exotic as to have given rise to Sapir-Whorf, and on top of all of this the perfect alibi of naïve simplicity.)

Now I am beginning to say things and immediately losing the word.

What about stretching a fleece substrate, like my Muji pyjama

shirt with the loop at the top of the collar, over a very thin armature, e.g. only a half inch deep (made, like my newest plank, of quarter-inch ply with the offcut wood-glue-stapled to the back of the edges)? If the fabric were white, this would look nice, I think.

But maybe this is just a detail of a Marc Kokopeli that I have seen. In any case I was fixated upon by the detail that his four-wheelers made of diapers were displayed on plinths with soft tops, “felt-covered” as Texte zur Kunst describes them. Indeed the plinths in these two images, the latter from Tales of the Veil (2017) at Edouard Montassut, appear the same.

The latter, whose press release is just as gnomic and turgid with shimmering meaning as his latest one,

Here is that 2017 piece of writing (I foveate upon “previously presented with only white fleece” and “the circularity of references to the fable of becoming an artist”): “Marc Kokopeli’s exhibition Tales of the Veil expands the themes approached in his first solo exhibition in New York. This time, the artist decided to dress the three walls, which were previously presented with only white fleece. Independent downtown fashion’s relation to the science fiction that we watch and live through concurrently serves as inspiration for the drapery. These Post-Baroque stylings inform the exhibition with questions about the circularity of references to the fable of becoming an artist.”

That exhibition included the following details that feel so familiar and yet sit stubbornly beyond any prospective recall; are they détournements of the said fable, or is something else going on entirely? It is this that I want all the turned-over-unto-patination faces of my own works to strive for, from neoprene to kurrent and duck fat to horse-dealers and so on into the horizon.

I can’t find a record for an exhibition of his before 2017. (Actually I can, it was the Lomex one in 2016 with the alabaster bird and his mother’s educational photographs.)

On the other hand, I find quite lucid “the circularity of references to the fable of becoming an artist”; I’ve even made

tentative first motions toward instituting something alike: The exhibition presents, as a fiction, a kunstlerroman narrative; if the fiction holds and works as art, it is fiction no more, and the conditions for its success have altered; there is a sort of Mallarméan flicker here, which is very much of a piece with my perennial and constant eye to phase-changes, tipping-points, Baudelaire-abstraction, etc.
Here is his newest text, from 2025 at Isabella Bortolozzi (I foveate upon “we generally always avoided working with the bodily figure, but maybe we are warming up a bit after years of working with the more automatic forms of toy design”): “There is a problem in the celestial test tube, the crystals in our TVs have a life of their own. Normally they would be in a more relaxed phase, but recently their globules have grown at an incalculable rate, creating their own sort of crude mindfulness. This was all a bit alarming, we generally always avoided working with the bodily figure, but maybe we are warming up a bit after years of working with the more automatic forms of toy design. / Eventually apathy gave way to dressing them up in some flashy clothing, giving them hobbies, talkshows. (Please avoid bright light) Once the curing time was complete, the blobs seemed ready to party, so the TV cabinets received their own upgrade into larger boxes and tubes. Consequently, we have giant playsets, or rather playsets for oversized children.”

I have had an idea, briefly, recently, to roll up or fold up and pin back or glue back the lower corner of substrate to expose a patch of armature onto which an espresso cup handle can be stuck.
I thought today that there would be a strange and unpinnable (pun) aspect to this if it were done with neoprene and if it were rolled up in such a way, as I think neoprene would be given to, that the roll becomes perfectly round, like a donut routed around the rectangular armature, in the manner of how certain kinds of socks are rolled down by children: baseball socks, I seem to recall; but also girls’ tall thin socks, I remember maybe in my first kindergarten that the girls would do this and it would be like a donut but also somewhat noticeably too hard and too tight.
Then I wondered if this arrangement wouldn’t more quickly bring to mind the way in which a condom is applied. I am more put off by this than I usually am (I usually am rather welcoming) with unexpected associations.

I think it would be useful--another thing to move to the Espresso

Cup / Ludovic Nemo document, among many bits which will have been lost--to furnish an account of the real experience I had at Brasserie Lipp upon taking a bite of the veal, or actually it was the pommes purées.

This may be read as a simple joke, an imitation of a trite way of saying how good the food was, likely used many times by second-rate food critics; to read it this way is to misunderstand me entirely and to lose all of the significance of the narrative image.

What is really going on is a Proustian dynamic in a minor, or perhaps a negative, key. Not a classical madeleine moment, but rather a Proustian dynamic in an expanded sense, a spreading-out of the spectrum of such dynamics which is somehow more comprehensive, fuller, perhaps Baudelairean in a sense in which what happens in Proust is a refinement or somehow a subset of what happens in Baudelaire. An inversion of the madeleine which can perhaps best be used as a prelude to, or a primer for, a later and more fully redemptive or transfigurative moment (yet another Proustian dynamic, this one even farther beyond the classical madeleine; likely, involving an espresso cup; faintly, I see the outline of it: That it is a variation upon, and not simply a variant of, the madeleine moment because, over and beyond an experience of the madeleine type, the espresso cup moment is built upon diligent repetition rather than nonreproducible incidental forgetting. What's more, the diligence of the repetition of the espresso cup moment is not a diligence of sacrificial discipline, but is rather pleasurable every time and every time anew).

Here it is: Ludovic Nemo takes a bite of the CASSOULET LIPP or the CONFIT DE CUISSE DE CANARD FRANÇAIS and what it makes him feel is vertigo, specifically the vertigo of the sense of a crime being or having been or to be committed (the crime, thus, is an act or an event with a temporality out of the world, just like any event in a painting). Though the following is a not-fully-determined inference--it is, in fact, one possibility among many--he partially comes to believe that he is or was or, rather, once was and is now again witness, either as bystander or as some kind of participant (and even then, he is no closer to being able to say whether he was victim or accomplice or even agent of the crime), some crime in the kitchen of Lipp whose memory he repressed and which now floods him with its resurgence; but, even as his whole sensory-memorial being is filled with this mist, he can positively touch nothing but an aura, an allure, which, even in its bareness, its sheerness, he still cannot identify as memory or imagination--but, whichever the case, he sees in that kitchen these horse-dealers; and then--only from then, with this vision coming to him or coming back to him (he cannot say which; the status of his innocence or his virginity is permanent flicker)--only then after this ambiguous advent of vision can he paint.

It occurred to me, earlier today, sometime this morning, that in “horse-dealer” there may be audible to some an alternate reading due to the sense of “horse” which I once learned from a commentary to the lyrics of “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite.” I do not know whether I condone this alternate sense or echo, though, if I do, I cite Veronika Voss and Baudelaire; in either case, I do not move to augment it; in either case, I am not to be blamed for it as the Kleistian usage predates it by so long a way.

This is from Lipp Genève, which opens at 8 a.m. instead of 12 p.m.

These images unsettle me for their crystallinity and their genericism--I know not quite what to do with them.

I’ve never cared about Beuys but for practical reasons of conservation considerations with the material we are to have in common I begin to.

Why and how did he draw this “Death and the Maiden”? From David Nolan Gallery’s drawings exhibition.

Cronenbourg Alsace? Lipp history
Photo from FT article w London helly
Clip possible-recognition from Price story, compare to the equally equivocal Diplo house identification

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If I haven't said it before, I've been thinking it for about a week: The caput mortuum (which isn't reddish like that, even if there's a maroon-mauve undertone to its color which is really a pure and deep enamel gray that feels nevertheless not to be trusted for purity, of course, not at all) in the bottom of my Silicoil, which I've hitherto discarded by the lumping scoop, is to be affixed to my paintings' surfaces in as crucial a role as tin plays for Strau. Sure, there's still a place for copper, signifying the mythic otherworld (the mind world--not the world of ideas, because these ideas have bodies & partake of my body, they being in my brain and therefore scaffolded with and indeed made of flesh and caffeine) populated by those Etrusciform figures I've made note of on various occasions, by way of the DMA's copper mirror and also by an alternate route (a roundabout way, as back from Egypt) to the same place--the same Kithira-place for me and Bella and ours--the alternate route being the copper emblem of the Schindler house, the hood over the hearth that would precisely not reflect but rather would glow, would go molten and incandescent with the sun, almost every day ("almost every day": such captures it, therein is all the difficulty), which, being a hearth, being cost-effective, being still the possible vessel for all the beauty and all the mornings and all the soirs d'or of the world, and all that Bella and I have made Schindler with his pour-in-place concrete (so cost-effective, and sustainable, and easy to climate-control, so they say, and evidently still given to the most elemental and lasting aesthetic harmonies of material and surface), since that historical Arcadia-summer which ended in "Chernobbio" and Paris, that summer which (even just the L.A. months of which) we recall to mind with sustaining fondness, these days, almost weekly.

17 November 2025

The following is Sontag on Walser and I came to Walser looking on this

hopeless and quiet and necessary and unbearably sad and repeated night looking for something that would change the way in which I see myself and my life and my way of being in the world, a large part of which way, I have come to see, I share with him, which is why I thought to look to him; but in trying to find the first story in this collection I accidentally found Susan Sontag's introduction to it, in which, though I was wary of her habit of overreaching and overstating, I found this remarkably identifiable comment in which I saw myself almost uncomfortably truly represented. There was in this recognition an especial acuteness because this evening I went out for a marginally abbreviated version of my recent habitual nighttime walk. The rain has been pouring for three or four days, and I thought it still was, but I tucked my gift pyjamas into my cowboy boots and went out anyways because my stomach hurt and I wanted to see Los Angeles wet because I always want everything to be new especially everything around me or at least to be different because in that it is new, everything, I want it to feel that way because in this case if it feels that way then it is that way.

"In long as in short prose Walser is a miniaturist, promulgating the claims of the anti-heroic, the limited, the humble, the small—as if in response to his acute feeling for the interminable. Walser's life illustrates the restlessness of one kind of depressive temperament: he had the depressive's fascination with stasis, and with the way time distends, is consumed; and spent much of his life obsessively turning time into space: his walks. His work plays with the depressive's appalled vision of endlessness: it is all voice-musing, conversing, rambling, running on. The important is redeemed as a species of the unimportant, wisdom as a kind of shy, valiant loquacity. / The moral core of Walser's art is the refusal of power; of domination. I'm ordinary-that is, nobody-declares the characteristic Walser persona. In "Flower Days" (1911), Walser evokes the race of "odd people, who lack character," who don't want to do anything. The recurrent "I" of Walser's prose is the opposite of the egotist's: it is that of someone 'drowning in obedience.'"

23 November 2025

Brief note about the day

Names I don't often find in my mouth: Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana; also Gérard Gasiorowski, and someone who may or may not be Cady Noland or Louise Lawler. Klein because his anthropometries are performing real transformations on real bodies, such that in the work & forever the real body involved in its making persists, is still present (in a new way, to which we are not desensitized--as opposed to the presence

which persists in a photographic likeness, for example). Fontana because space really is radically transformed in a gesture which is discrete and compact and frameable (the last of which is crucial because it is therefore a painting; but of separate interest is its exquisite frameability witnessed by the way in which a Concetto spaziale looks in the imaginary apartment of the late-60s collector staged by Helly Nahmad London). Fontana also because of the uniqueness of the materiality of his Strutture al neon that I kind of wondered at as I came up under them in the high-ceilinged top floor of the Museo del Novecento in Milan, where I looked down onto the Duomo as though from a medieval Russian balloon. (The uniqueness of the materiality of this neon is to be, I think, not altogether unlike the uniqueness of the materiality of the neoprene that, according to my thinking, is to be involved with some of Ludovic Nemo's espresso-cup works.) Lawler for similar reasons pertaining to the creatio ex nihilo (formula that, I've recently noticed, interests Josef Strau greatly and insistently) of space, which the TLF Trio insist upon, or they insist upon its analogue in music. Noland, maybe, for the same reason as Gasiorowski: the play with persona, a specific history of such play against or among which Ludovic Nemo's personification's specificity is to situate or nestle.
And Nate Boyce, who I find, I say to myself, one step ahead of me (say ridiculously, I know, as I have of course not yet begun to walk): That this new work uses "Oil, acrylic, pencil, and wax on engraved aluminum"--all of which I have recently become determined, and not thinking of Boyce at all, will figure crucially for Ludovic Nemo's simple-alchemical espresso cup works, the ones which are, basically, different syntaxes or different sentences, all clearly diagrammed and actively and frankly posited (uttered) (posed) (said), sentences about "this is a painting" and "I am an artist" and "this is beautiful" and "this is good" and "this changes life" and "I love this."

Thought that I can, at great delay, finish--really finish--the things which I bricolaged from aluminum offcut and supersmooth surface, etc., finish them by the mere nominality of the gesture of rendering some kind of espresso cup on their surface; not that such a kind of object as would result from this would be in some way archetypical or exemplary for the sort of work I intend to make, the sort of thing I would consider to be a successful piece of art, a successful painting, but rather, instead, that if I did such a thing a handful of times, I would coherently postulate one kind of thing which could be one kind of thing among many--necessarily oscillating among the possibilities, "progressing dialectically," revising and thereby covering real ground. What this one would be, and in this it can share this status with many and very different kinds of things that I would also think

to make as paintings, would be, quite simply and frankly and specifically, a change of materiality for a given specific espresso cup--that is all. A change of materiality for a given specific espresso cup: and thereby pleasurable, in precisely the same way and for exactly the same reason as that taking a photograph of a given specific espresso cup becomes a pleasurable object-act: an objective-material aestheticization, and also, separately, a transmutation, a thing whose workings Mallarmé would invoke la notion or, even more usefully, l'estampe, in order to (successfully and simply and coherently and clearly!) explain. A transmutation of the materiality of the espresso cup; that is all; a transmutation which in this case gives rise to a painting, gives rise to an object which is a painting, which is also, to me, important. A transmutation of the materiality of the given specific espresso cup, a transmutation which can proceed by way of reaching into the worm-dirt-bucket which is the entirety of the phenomenological workings of any given specific object, and wiggling the fingers, pulling some worms here and pushing some worms there, rearranging worms, adding worms, moving worms, removing worms, so that, after the hand has been reached in and wiggled, it's still the same bucket of dirt with worms in it, but now it is completely different.

I have cancer of the brain! I cannot write, cannot think and that I cannot write proves it!

Thought also that, beyond the above, and putting blinders to the question of whether or not to think a relation to Nate Boyce, I ought to see whether by applying a thin flat couche of matte medium to an aluminum surface and then laying a drawing--even in chalk, even in charcoal, on acid-free paper--onto the matte medium and then, after its drying, spraying it with water so that the image appears and then using the Dremmel to do what needs to be done and then (but not necessarily) sanding away (some or most of) what remains of the paper, that I may thus administer new transformations of the materiality of certain objects, and do so in painting, as painting. That such a gesture may situate itself as a punctum, an espresso-cup punctum, among an ambiance of more or less discrete or interlinked (in a thin but notionally pervasive web of filaments) exquisitenesses (indulgent ones, Viennese ones, Manet ones, Cézanne-watercolor ones, Gauguin-tidepool ones) of paint. And that the Dremmel and the festool gestured be let to be fruitful and multiply and conjugate upon (and, later, under) other gestures of paint, of oil paint and rabbit skin glue; not as a means unto the end of an allover effect (Lauren Quin), nor unto the end of various effects of various deformations of the figure (Phoebe Nesgos), but rather as acts all performed self-consciously and superposing and interleaving unto an effect of marbling of performance and authorship and self-consciousness, marbling of these into a texture, a unity reified and united under a punctum, a punctum which I am these days seeing always as an espresso cup (but knowing that what I am these days always seeing is limited, because it doesn't let me see all of what I want to see: His Transalpine Eminency (my HTE alike in this sense to HCE) among the horse-dealers, the female nude which

will never and will only be Bella (Belle, doubled, and, like Roberte, thereby éternellisée et anéantie (this is not a quotation)), and such truck.

I was trying to enumerate in my head examples of what just occurred to me as a certain type of title applied to paintings, which may be called auction-core or icon-core. I suppose these are all designating a painting somewhere between a portrait and a figure painted with what Tatol called "facility of genre" (distinguishing Matisse's women from Alex Katz's).

Garçon à la pipe, Blue boy, L'enfant au pigeon, Girl with a pearl earring.

And then there is Manuel Osorio Enqrique de Zuñiga, a painting which itself belongs fully in this category, even typefies it, though its title could hardly be more opposed to the quality I am trying to pin down.

Widening out the criteria just a bit, there are also The blonde odalisque, Grande odalisque, Blue nude, Manet's champagne blonde the precise wording of whose title I cannot now find …

That there are many--or several; perhaps not so many--postures or fundamental epitomizations of habitus that painters always end up by boiling themselves down to, or being boiled down to by their reception. Different painters with their different ways of working, their different attitudes, their different stances, different aims--all of which partakes of "style" but does not dissolve into it.

What is my defining gesture? It involves a choking, a suffocation; but, underneath this, there is an explicit reavowal of the bohemian's "unconditional devotion to one or more of the arts"; but then--that which perhaps distinguishes me, not by opposition but rather by refinement or subdivision, from Hantaï--my own choking is not that of reaching all at once and for years on end the very end of abstraction and the excruciating of arriving there in Hantaï's state of unique aliveness to the stakes or to a unique and exemplary set of monumental stakes; rather, my own choking has more to do with the self-criticality that nips every painting in its bud out of a hypersensitive hyperrecognition of the latent wrongheadedness or pretroddenness or stereotypability of almost every thing--every single thing except one, maybe--which a painter can do today; in other words, what Tatol would describe as the unique and uniquely near-insurmountable (and even maybe positively insurmountable--there is always the possibility that this be the case) difficulties which block

painting today. I take the time to trace all of this out because the following occurred to me: That if this is my fundamental difficulty, the problema or situation or predicament determining my essential gesture, then maybe here is how that essential gesture can take form in response to it: That I can find a way to paint anyway, that I, too, can come to my own unique and ingenious new solution and succeed to painting; and that the way, perhaps, that I can come to do it involves the somewhat unlikely means of the presencing (spell-like) of a fictional painter, and that by this roundabout way of making paintings just in order to give him paintings (just so that he can come into being in the only way in which any artist ever can: that is, by succeeding in art: this may be a Mallarméan way of looking at the author and the work, but in any case the view I'm positing is that the work generates the author and not vice versa, just as it is sense which generates point-of-view and not vice versa, and that is the ontology of persons), by that roundabout way, it will end up having been the case that I, painting as or, perhaps more simply and truly, painting for Ludovic, if they end up being good and therefore real paintings of his then he ends up really being an artist and then I will have succeeded in making him and the means whereby will have been that I will have made the good paintings which generate him which will mean that I will have made good paintings which will mean, finally, that I become a painter, a painter simply, but not thereby short-circuiting the necessarily circuitous route required, i.e. retaining the second-degree-ness of my painter-status, a second-degree-ness (in the syntactical sense, the Gödel-destined modal logic sense, the structural sense? None of these feel quite right), a doubled status (this feels closer to the mark: doubled in a Klossowskian sense, a doubling involving flicker which never settles into one or the other of the alternatives, a flicker which perhaps in its oscillation amounts to a glimmer, a shining, an authentic luminance), a doubled status thenceforth present and palpable in my (Ludovic's; both) every single gesture, every single mark.

Brought up to this--to backtrack--by my noticing of the way in which all writers about Hantaï, with the possible exception of Warnock, seem irresistibly drawn to the mode of narrativizing him in the idiosyncratic manner of epitomization in a single gesture, or even in a single impulse (which may be an aspect or a facet of a gesture); often, it involves his drowning, his blinding, his gagging, his suffocation. I have picked up this manner from him, gesture as maniera, say; but for me it is different also while it is the same, and it is this difference that I was trying to render precise above. Specifically, I did this noticing while reading something from Fourcade quoted in a footnote on page 82 of Didi-Huberman's L'Etoilement: "[Hantaï] a désormais épousé l'impulsion fondamentale donnée à la peinture par la couleur; il s'appuie sans frein sur cette impulsion en même temps qu'il se risque entier en elle et avec elle pour en creuser la respiration. Car c'est de cela que Hantaï est à ce jour un spécialiste: la respiration, la respiration de la peinture et, conséquemment, la respiration par la peinture"; and this struck me as

so--not stereotypical, but endlessly repeated.

6 December 2025

Mystic word-strings in the last warm light of a December evening:

Mist, memory, allure, and all of them distilled, necessarily at high speed, from within the fold of the pursuit--the pursuit which is apperception. Distilled, and registered: like the index of a light beam refracted through the coursing ripple of a flowing fluid. About the specific form of the ripple, the following description can be made: In one limit case, there is laminar flow; Tarkovsky enumerates other limit cases of local-maximum beauty, along certain coastlines of the possibility-space; in all cases, Ezra Pound's observation about the rocks of the river bottom applies. These observations are general, but this is all true of the flow when the flow is apperception. The beams of light reflected, refracted through it are the mists, the memory, and the allures, and art is the skillful playing of these beams. How can beams of light be played? What I strive to take into my hand with every humble reengagement of the task of the copiste is line: Line as memory, line as distilled mist, line which is tensile like catgut but unlike it not necessarily straight. Catgut of the viol da gamba upon which the angel's bowstring saws out chords which, too, are beams of light. And besides the angels at play upon their strings, there is also St. Cecilia, that Cecilia who is also Madame Brunet, who like all of Manet's sitters is the particular girl set off as the opposite to the unrepresentable Diana who is Bella herself--opposite, but an opposite who by aggregation of registration of inversion finally realizes the unrepresentable in the only way in which I could ever have been capable. I can never paint her, I can only paint her.

The idea is that I can be a real painter only by a thousand such consummated affinities, none constituting art all on its own, but in accumulation adding up to something irreplaceable. I paraphrase the inverse of a remark of Sean Tatol's (his indictment of Olivia van Kuiken*, which I don't necessarily agree with): That it is no wonder that a painter's manner of application of paint--the character, in a narrow sense that is however ultimately as broad as you like, his only act of importance--has come to be called his "cuisine."

"I think she's doing the bad version of the "painting nerd" mindset, where the multiplicity of references and technical strategies has accumulated into an unwieldy pile, which is better than trying to just rip off Bacon or AbEx or whatever, but there doesn't seem to be much hope of it cooking down into a sensibility. The point of engaging with history and "the canon" and all that isn't to like all the right

painters or to have the most references, it's to have a deep connection with enough specific artworks, artists, and eras that one's sense of art refines into something that comes together beneath all the signifiers.”

7 December 2025

On the phone with Bella today, walking down my mountainside, having nearly cried on the phone with my mother but since recovered a certain optimism, I said, with recognition that the most likely reading of my statement would be to see it as an exemplary case of the class of stratagems which I deploy to rationalize never “yet” being quite ready to paint, that “I need to be able to draw like Pontormo, and also glaze like da Vinci, at times, and, the rest of the time, to be able to handle paint like Manet.”

Later in the evening, on the other side of lows and highs of failed drawings and drawings I was really quite happy with (all copies), in the course of talking them over with Bella she indicated that I really do have a style, and that, moreover, it becomes clearly visible precisely in the perigees of my attempts at emulation of Pontormo. (This makes perfect sense; I have found myself explaining such a phenomenon in other draughtsmen several times recently—describing it to my mother on a walk last weekend, chez Pontormo himself vis à vis Michelangelo; and then, maybe, I can’t quite remember, to Brian in trying to tell him exactly why and exactly how much I loved his second drawing after a Pontormo last Thursday.) I tried to pursue a full elucidation of what she saw, tried to extract more than she said, at risk of asking leading questions, until I had produced as much evidence for my record as I could possibly squeeze. I tried first to ask her whose style my style is like; in other words, if you subtracted Pontormo from my studies after Pontormo, and had to try to attribute what remained to a draughtsman extant on the record, who or nearly-who would it be? She said she didn’t know enough painters’ drawings, only their paintings. So, suspecting it was my unrefinedness, my roughness, my lack of control over value, my inability to smoothly blend, I showed her drawings by Beckmann, Kirchner … and I pulled drawings from all corners of the history of art, leaving no stone unturned. She’d long since begun to seem unlikely ever to return a positive, until I produced some drawings of Manet. I couldn’t believe the odds: It is Manet whose hand I want, but not in dry media—I want his cuisine for my own, his legerdemain, his anything-in-paint for that perfect look, that certain regard (?). I’d been listening, intensively throughout the latter part of last week, to T.J. Clark’s The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers, not finding what I sought but still delighting to spend time in the voice of that great writer and in the shadow of that

most perfect of modern painters (“perfect” not in the sense that, as the anecdote--whose?--goes, Mantegna had over Bellini even while Bellini’s Agony was the better picture; perfect, rather, in the sense that any after him can, like an aftershock, perhaps measure more highly in some certain metric within the rubric that Manet defined, but none of them--no Cézanne, no Picasso, no Duchamp, no Matisse, no Picabia--can outpace him all up and down the card. I digress).
And yet she affirmed it--excepting those drawings in which he shows off a concision that I wouldn’t be brave enough for (this from Bella, paraphrased).
She marked a likeness particularly in the “intensity” of line in such drawings as these cats.

She made another caveat: The profile, here, that one line which speaks volumes, that one line which alone says more than every other mark on the sheet in combination, that sort of line would not be in my vocabulary.

I am made to wonder at and to dwell upon the drawings which lie at the limits of his style, such an exceptional decisiveness as is drips from each line in this Study for Christ the gardener (?) and such a degree of finish as makes one wonder whether this Portrait of a lady comes from his student days, or a day at the Louvre. But in almost immediately turning to such thoughts, my mind tries to stamp out the precious spark whose very rarity was the excitement under this new stone first of all. A style, a style.

11 December 2025

This afternoon I traded a drawing of mine for the copy Brian made after Pontormo, the one which I loved so much, for the modulated tensile quality of its line and its effortless registration of the autograph anatomy of that master of mine.

I let him pick among all my drawings. He chose the dog.

This evening I grew fond of a certain idea of painting: That I might use the Dremmel, and even the Festool hand-sanding attachment with its spirographic intaglio, in alternation with sessions of oil painting in that hand which comes most normally to me, namely, very wet washes brushed onto Dibond--washes which happen, perfectly, to lie so thinly that, I believe, they will impede the engraver's progress through the treated surface and into gleaming aluminum even less than the plastic wrapping which I failed to remove before making my study after Pontormo with the Dremmel a week or two ago, which I then had to sand with the Festool to remove what remained of the plastic, after which little of my markmaking remained. Drawn toward all this, again, by the stuttering line which--as a scansion of both velocity and acceleration--seems to me, every time I look at the aluminum scraps on my coffee table where I made such marks, so effectively to make possible the kind of plastic qualities and haptic values and gestural nuances in which Matisse and de Kooning lived out their whole lives; drawn toward this, again, despite having between then and now found the same stuttering marks in a Nate Boyce which I had seen before but, having never used a Dremmel, did not recognize; and, seeing them made by an artist whom I already admire too full-bodiedly to risk closer approach, therefore felt that such a mark could not be mine.

But tonight, I changed my mind, thinking about layering such marks made toward figurative (in the sense of Matisse and early de Kooning)

ends, and, for this, only gaining in (rather than sacrificing) their haptic, gestural, and plastic dimensions, over and over such oil painting as I found myself doing, again, when yesterday I carried out the first of two or three sessions of the first of two or three studies after Manet in semi-parallel to the first painting in oils of my Espresso Cup. I think that in this setting they will look quite good, and quite unlike Nate Boyce paintings, and, for that matter, if I use the Festool too, I think my paintings will still be in not too close a relation to those of Phoebe Nesgos.

12 December 2025

While I was at work today, I thought that I would like to use, for my first exhibition of paintings, which I will entitle The Autobiography of Ludovic Nemo and which will include “His Transalpine Eminency” (which may bear a different title), etc., the following document as a press release:

Or this alternate version, or some other; but this has the disadvantage of displaying only that shade’s surname:\

And it will be enough to cite it, to relate this name to this constructed subject, attached to a non-subject, and thereby detached from the hermeneutic world of the ways of painting and their histories, which this divagation nevertheless serves importantly to conjure.

On the Volpini exhibition--not that Bernard himself, or Gauguin, or Pont Aven, means especially much to me, not as much as, say, Manet or Balthus, but it should be noted that this showing was an extremely important moment for history of the female nude into which I am to insert myself--a very particular and private history, which traces through Olympia and through these paintings and through

technically unsexable (because concretely missexed by scholars) studies by Pontormo and that missed painting by Artem Nanushyan and the Degas Peasant girls bathing in the sea at dusk from the National Gallery and all the Modiglianis and all those countless others which with my attention I have fixed permanently in future paint.

13 December 2025

In Costamagna, looking by chance at the pages surrounding the drawing of a young “boy” in a turban whose copy by my friend I hold so fondly in my hand as I take my breakfast and my espresso in my golden cup and saucer from which I sip also scotch les soirs, I find a continuation of the story which is the heart-knot of the transalpine such as I have conceived it, and a certain figure, Adrian VI (Adriaen Florensz, what a Stephanic golden name, with its Flemish-Florentine axis which makes one think of the drawings of Memlinc circulating in Andrea’s workshop and the princely achievements of van der Goes for Portinari and his Mort de la vierge which in Brugge I found to constitute the only suitable sibling to Pontormo’s Visitation or his Deposition), the vestiges of whose persona-allure which live on as mists inhering upon vellum and canvas will finally complete my His transalpine eminency, my Freikorperkardinal.

I am thinking foremost of this hat, and also this mantle if I am able to retain only the lineaments of its trim and replace its simple membrane with something more lush (something having more in common with Parmigianino’s portrait of that condottiere, with the handling of Velásquez and Manet, or even with the Rembrandts I saw in England), something green and a little violet and crystalline and adorned with filaments of gold, all of which I hope to make the incarnadine gems of fabric to glow like scarlets only Gauguin has managed to paint. I am thinking also of this diaphanous pleated smock, which can part at the belly like Piero’s Madonna del parto.

I paste generously from Costamagna, because it is in its two-expansive texture, its too-wide net, that the mists in question are diluted to a necessary thinness--an attenuation essential to their potency (le sens trop précis rature / ta vague littérature, if I recall the phrase).

"Plus que Luther, qui ne tera que peu d'émules dans la Péninsule, Erasme marqua protondément la pensée italienne. Tous les cardi-naux, prélats et autres personnalités de l'Eglise qui préconisaient un renouveau de la chrétienté, tiraient de sa pensée la quintessence de leur conduite. Mais ces «cardinaux érasmiens» proches des Théatins, puis de Valdés, qui se retrouveront plus tard à Viterbe, seront finalement mis au ban de l'Église catholique dès les premières sessions du concile de Trente, leur ouverture d'esprit ne pouvant répondre à la violence de la Réforme luthérienne. Toutefois, à la mort de Léon X, le premier décembre 1521, leurs espoirs d'une plus grande humanisation de l'Église étaient encore fondés. Pour sortir d'un conclave bloqué, avait alors été élu un pape d'origine batave, le cardinal Adriaen Florensz, qui prit le nom d'Adrien VI.
L'élection de ce précepteur impérial proche d'Érasme suscita beaucoup d'espérances. Pour les piagnoni florentins, il pouvait incarner le réformateur annoncé par Savonarole : « [...] parce qu'il faut comprendre non que l'Eglise romaine doive changer de forme, mais que la Rome d'à présent, idest les méchants qui sont à Rome, sera rejetee et disparaîtra et que la fine fleur des chrétiens sera du côté de Jérusalem. Je ne dis pas pour autant que l'Eglise romaine doit dis-paraitre, ni qu'il faille changer de toi, ni qu'il doive y avoir deux papes; mais je dis que, sous un pape qui va venir, le bien-vivre chrétien fleurira à Jésuralem, plus que dans nos contrées. Et toutes les contrées du monde où il y a des chrétiens s'humilieront devant l'Église romaine, parce que toutes seront régies par la Foi romaine sous un pape saint, successeur de saint Pierre, premier évêque de Rome, dont le siège et le diocèse principal seront à Rome, même s'il détient, comme tous les autres papes, un pouvoir plein et entier sur toutes les autres églises 4». Adrien VI reçoit le soutien d'Egidio da Viterbo, du cardinal Lorenzo Campeggi ou encore de l'ami d'Érasme, le cardinal Girolamo Seripando. Le nouveau pape est humble et pieux, profondément désireux de réformer l'Église. Il professe une piété plus proche du Christ et des Saintes Écritures.
Cependant, ses vingt mois de pontificat (9 janvier 1522-14 septembre 1523) seront un échec : il ne pourra empêcher la publication de la Bible allemande de Luther (automne 1522), la progression des Turcs en Méditerranée (chute de Rhodes en 1522) et s'attirera l'hostilité d'une importante partie de la curie romaine 6. Très peu enclin à

s'intéresser à toute forme d'art, il se verra même critiqué de façon acerbe par Vasari 7. Le 18 novembre 1523 voit l'avènement au trône de saint Pierre d'un autre Médicis, le cardinal Giulio, devenu Clément VII. Le nouveau pape, homme intelligent et cultivé, se préoccupa plus des arts que de tenter d'enrayer la Réforme allemande. La situation militaire et politique se dégrade en Italie.

François Ier, seul opposant potentiel à l'empereur Charles Quint, est fait prisonnier à Pavie; par ailleurs, une imposante armée, composée en partie de lansquenets luthériens, descend à travers la Péninsule jusqu'à Rome. Le 6 mai 1527, la ville est mise à sac, ce qui a pour effet d'ébranler l'Église catholique. Plus que jamais se fait sentir le besoin d'un concile, avis partagé et exprimé par Charles Quint lui-même : « [...] il semble que c'est de la main de Dieu et par sa divine permission, pour parvenir et donner chemin à quelque bonne paix en chrétienté, pour le bien et repos d'icelle, et par conséquent en résultera ung concille pour reformacion de l'Église tant désirée et nécessaire que chacun scet, et mesme pour extirper l'erronée secte luthérane. Et en ce cas, pensant au succès de si grandz bénéfices, nous avons en plus plésir que autrement de ce qu'il a pleu Dieu disposer en cest victoire de Rome 8». La décision de convoquer ce concile ne sera prise qu'en mai 1536 : les premières séances se tiennent au Vatican même?, avant d'être déplacées à Trente en 1545, et d'aboutir à la radicale Contre-Réforme (1563), qui contribuera à l'instauration des monarchies absolues et au retour d'une certaine forme de féodalisme, bien éloignée des idéaux qui primaient au début du siècle. Toutefois, Charles Quint essaya auparavant de régler la querelle religieuse en convoquant de nouveau la diète à Augsbourg en 1530, afin de rapprocher les tenants de l'ancienne église et ceux de la doctrine nouvelle. Malgré les efforts de Philipp Melanchthon, ce fut un nouvel échec. En 1541, après la diète de Ratisbonne, le schisme entre les deux Églises est définitif, et les espoirs des « cardinaux érasmiens» à jamais éteints. Leur échec signe le début des persécutions, puisqu'ils sont tous désormais considérés comme hérétiques.

En 1523, nous l'avons vu, le doute s'est emparé d'une grande partie des esprits. La réforme luthérienne est en marche, et la majeure partie des « intellectuels» italiens est consciente de la nécessité d'un changement de l'Église catholique. Nombreux sont ceux qui placent leurs espoirs dans le nouveau pape Adrien VI. Ce dernier aurait effectivement pu être le maître d'œuvre de cette transformation nécessaire, à l'aune des préceptes énoncés par Érasme. Les fresques du cloître de la chartreuse correspondent à cette période, dont la connaissance est fondamentale pour la compréhension du cycle; nous aurons l'occasion de revenir sur ce sujet. Fort de la commande qu'il a reçue des moines chartreux l'année précédente pour décorer à fresque certaines des lunettes du grand cloître, Pontormo se réfugie donc pendant l'épidémie à Galluzzo, accompagné selon Vasari de Bronzino 10; il y retrouve probablement d'autres

Florentins de sa connaissance, voire certains autres artistes 11. Du début de son séjour à la chartreuse date vraisemblablement le Double

portrait de la collection de Vittorio Cini à Venise (voir cat. n° 40). Le tableau représente le gendre de Becuccio Bicchieraio et un autre personnage non identifié, tous deux amis intimes de Pontormo, qui peuvent également avoir compté parmi les hôtes des chartreux durant la période de l'épidémie. Au verso du dessin des Offices (GDSU, inv. n° 449 F), l'on peut voir une esquisse préparatoire pour la main du modèle tenant la lettre, sur laquelle est inscrit un passage du De Amicitia de Cicéron; sur le recto se trouve une figure coiffée d'un turban (ill. 42) qui évoque les personnages de Poggio a Caiano, à cette distinction près qu'elle est déjà stylistiquement marquée par le nouveau style graphique adopté par l'artiste dans les dessins préparatoires aux fresques de la chartreuse. Ce lien d'amitié entre les trois hommes, les deux personnages portraiturés et le peintre, apparaît comme le prolongement de cette période heureuse qui précéda la peste de 1523. Une fois de plus, Pontormo prend pour modèle de l'un de ses portraits une œuvre de Raphaël; plus précisément, il emprunte à l'Urbinate le lien d'amitié représenté avec tant de finesse dans l'Autoportrait de Raphaël et d'un ami aujourd'hui conservé au musée du Louvre (voir cat. n° A95). La citation de Cicéron est probablement le reflet de l'humanisme, par trop inspiré de l'Antiquité et très en vogue dans la capitale de la chrétienté, humanisme dont le fer de lance est le cardinal Fedra Inghirami. A l'époque où Pontormo peint le portrait, Érasme n'a pas encore publié son ouvrage le plus féroce contre l'Eglise de Rome, le Dialogus cicero-nianus (mars 1528); dans le cas contraire, le peintre n'aurait probablement pas fait référence à Cicéron, symbole de l'humanisme romain tant décrié par Érasme, dont chacune des paroles semblait dicter la conduite du milieu auquel Pontormo appartenait.

La décoration de la chartreuse est liée à une personnalité prédo-minante: Leonardo Buonafé. Cet homme d'église, directeur de l'hôpital de Santa Maria Nuova de Florence en 1500, puis de l'hôpital romain de Santo Spirito in Sassia en 1527, évêque de Vieste en 1528 et finalement de Cortone en 1529, commence sa carrière ecclésiastique en tant que prieur de la chartreuse de Galluzzo. Malgré ses nombreuses charges, il reste proche du monastère, qui lui servira de lieu de sépulture. C'est lui qui dirige la construction du vaste cloître correspondant au schéma des monastères de l'ordre et impose Pontormo pour décorer les lunettes des angles (voir cat. nos 41-45). En témoigne le portrait de Buonafé, que l'artiste insère au milieu des moines encadrant la scène des Pèlerins d'Emmaüs (voir cat. n° 46). Lorsque Pontormo reçut la charge de la décoration, il exécuta un premier projet pour l'une des fresques, datable vers 1522 (Chicago, The Art Institute, inv. n° 1989.187; ill. 45). Cette première proposition, peut-être élaborée sur une suggestion de Buonafé, a cependant été abandonnée 12.

La gravité de la situation politico-religieuse ne correspondait probablement plus à une iconographie aussi raffinée, et le cycle devait désormais se conformer davantage aux textes évangéliques épurés.

Il est possible que Buonafé se soit également réfugié à la chartreuse

en 1523, où il aurait dicté la nouvelle démarche qu'il convenait d'adopter pour décorer les angles du cloître. Toujours est-il que le choix de l'iconographie dérive du texte d'un moine chartreux, la Vita Christi de Ludolph de Saxe, simple méditation sur la Passion conforme à la vocation contemplative de l'ordre.
Du fait de la réserve de Vasari, les fresques de la chartreuse marquent pour les critiques le début de la « décadence» de Pontormo. Ce jugement négatif correspond à la désapprobation manifestée par l'auteur des Vies à l'égard de l'utilisation que fait Pontormo des gravures de Dürer, pour peindre ses fresques 13. L'admiration pour ce dernier était cependant très répandue en Italie, et tout particulièrement à Florence. Nous avons déjà vu l'intérêt que lui portait Fra Bartolomeo 14. Andrea del Sarto s'inspira lui aussi à plusieurs reprises du maître de Nuremberg, notamment lorsqu'il décora le cloître du Scalzo (ce qui ne lui valut pas pour autant une critique aussi acerbe de Vasari); de même, nombre d'artistes moins créatifs, tels Bachiacca ou Antonio di Donnino, utilisaient ses gravures pour donner un fond à leurs compositions. Alors qu'il peignait le panneau de Joseph en Egypte (voir cat. n° 22), Pontormo avait déjà manifesté un intérêt particulier pour les gravures nordiques, et les fresques de la chartreuse semblent être un hommage à Dürer : à chaque composition de Pontormo correspond en effet une gravure de la Petite ou de la Grande Passion. Il convient probablement d'attribuer cette orientation, particulière dans l'art du peintre, à un désir du commanditaire. II est tout à fait permis d'imaginer Buonafé, fin connaisseur en matière artistique, proposant à l'artiste de recourir une nouvelle fois aux gravures du maître nordique afin d'élaborer les différentes compositions, non plus du seul point de vue esthétique, mais afin de donner un sens particulier au cycle.
Effectivement, Buonafé, probablement marqué par Savonarole et Egidio da Viterbo, ainsi que bon nombre de Florentins, croyait en une possible réforme de l'Église romaine sous l'égide d'un nouveau pape. L'élection d'Adrien VI portait tous leurs espoirs; il était permis de penser que le nouveau souverain pontife allait œuvrer dans une telle direction et que, grâce à ses origines nordiques, il serait à même de concilier les différents partis. L'aspect volontairement nordique des fresques de la chartreuse devient de la sorte un hommage au pape originaire d'Utrecht, mais aussi à Érasme qui, grâce à ses écrits, a concrétise ce besoin de réforme de l'Eglise. Lorsque Vasari écrit les Vies, alors que les effets de la Contre-Réforme se font sentir parfois de manière destructrice sur les œuvres d'art, peut-être ne cherche-t-il, par sa critique négative, qu'à protéger un cycle qu'il estime sans doute à sa juste valeur 15. En détournant l'attention de ce cycle, il parvient à en faire oublier l'orientation religieuse, qui aurait pu passer pour hérétique; mais il ne peut imaginer la réaction particulièrement négative des historiens qui suivront 16.
Indépendamment de la Petite et de la Grande Passion de Dürer citées par Vasari, Pontormo s'inspire également, pour les fresques de la chartreuse, d'autres gravures isolées du maître nordique. Ainsi par exemple, le Christ devant Pilate suit, dans la position de certaines

des figures, la xylographie de la Maison de bain (Bar. 128). Pontormo ne rompt toutefois pas pour autant avec la peinture florentine; plus spécifiquement, dans cette fresque du Christ devant Pilate, il semble vouloir effectuer un retour à la tradition et marquer ainsi son appartenance à une école. Le rapport entre la fresque et le relief du Christ devant Pilate, sculpté par Donatello sur la chaire nord de San Lorenzo, est évident 17; de façon moins flagrante, Pontormo cherche aussi à prolonger la grande tradition de la fresque, celle du Quattrocento. Le serveur de Pilate, descendant les marches un plat à la main, évoque ainsi les figures élégantes qui peuplaient les fresques des églises toscanes peintes par Filippo Lippi, Benozzo Gozzoli ou Domenico Ghirlandaio. Cette orientation affirmée pourrait même être mise sur le compte d'une volonté de l'artiste et de son commanditaire, qui entendent ainsi suggérer le rôle joué par la capitale toscane depuis le XVe siècle dans la révolution religieuse en cours. En revanche, c'est encore à Dürer que Pontormo emprunte ses effets luministes, rarement développés à Florence. Compte tenu de l'état de conservation des fresques, largement endommagées par les intempéries, il est difficile d'imaginer l'effet produit dans le Christ au jardin des oliviers, scène nocturne éclairée par la lumière de la lune qui avait tant séduit Vasari. Pour orner la chambre du prieur du couvent, Pontormo, imitant Dürer (Bar. 20), peint un panneau, aujourd'hui perdu, représentant une Nativité (voir cat. n° 47) illuminée par une lanterne. Alors qu'elles commençaient à être régulièrement représentées au nord des Apennins, peu de scènes nocturnes avaient été exécutées jusqu'alors à Florence, où pourtant la Libération de saint Pierre peinte par Raphaël au Stanze était probablement connue de tous. Pontormo adopte ainsi les deux principaux courants qui président à la réalisation des scènes nocturnes : celui de la «grande peinture» romaine de Raphaël et Sebastiano del Piombo, à travers l'effet lunaire du Christ au jardin des oliviers, et celui plus nordique de Dürer dans la Nativité. On peut s'imaginer l'effet produit par cette Nativité en observant celles aujourd'hui tant admirées de Lotto (Sienne, Pinacoteca Nazionale) ou Corrège (Dresde, Gemäldegalerie), qui ne peuvent que faire regretter la perte du tableau de Pontormo. Dans la Résurrection, ce dernier éclaire la scène grâce à la révélation lumineuse de la divinité du Christ, également largement développée par Dürer. Ainsi s'adapte-t-il à une orientation artistique également inaugurée en Italie par Raphaël (Vision d'Ézéchiel, Florence, Galleria Palatina, ou Transfiguration, Vatican, Pinacoteca Vaticana), et amplement diffusée par Parmesan ou Corrège, avant d'être systématisée par les artistes de la Contre-Réforme et du Baroque.

Pour réaliser la Lamentation sur le Christ mort, Pontormo adhère étroitement aux modèles durériens. Dans un premier temps il avait prévu de représenter une «Déposition» (voir Florence, GDSU, inv. n° 6622 F). Ce changement iconographique, ayant pour but de mettre davantage l'accent sur le corps du Christ, peut être considéré comme un hommage à l'ordre des Théatins créé en 1524, lesquels vouaient alors un culte particulier au Saint Sacrement. Par rapport à ses

modèles, Pontormo simplifie le second plan pour ne laisser qu'une évocation de la nature, des échelles et des croix; cette tendance à l'abstraction annonce le pas irrévocable franchi dans la «maniera» par l'artiste, lorsqu'il entreprendra la Pietà de Santa Felicita l'année sui-vante. Quant à la Montée au Calvaire, Pontormo souscrit pour ses figures à un michelangélisme renouvelé. Il semble qu'à l'époque de la chartreuse, les dangers de contamination atténués, l'artiste se soit rendu de nouveau à Rome, où il copia une fois de plus les figures de la voûte de la Sixtine (Florence, GDSU, inv. n° 6702 F verso). Sans doute Rosso lui servit-il de guide dans cette ville où il résidait depuis lannée précédente. Le michelangélisme de Pontormo est similaire à celui que Rosso adoptera dans les fresques d'Adam et Eve (Rome, Santa Maria della Pace), mais aussi à celui du Mariage de la Vierge de San Lorenzo, daté de 1523. En fait, dans ces deux dernières fresques (la Lamentation sur le Christ mort et la Montée au Calvaire), Pontormo a recours a la gamme colorée que Rosso emploie à merveille dans le retable de San Lorenzo. Couleurs fortes et changeantes s y opposent sous l'ettet d'un éclat de lumière; ces fins mélanges de jaune et de vert, de rose et de bleu, sont également une adaptation du jeu de couleurs créé par Michel-Ange à la Sixtine.
Quoique le cycle ait été conçu dans son ensemble, il est cependant possible de discerner une sensible évolution stylistique entre les différentes fresques qui le composent. L'artiste commença par l'angle sud-est du cloître en réalisant le Christ au jardin des oliviers et le Christ devant Pilate, avant de s'attaquer à la Résurrection, puis à la Montée au Calvaire, pour aboutir enfin à la Lamentation sur le Christ mort et à la Mise en Croix, laquelle ne fut jamais exécutée. La raison qui empêcha la réalisation de cette dernière œuvre, dont seul le projet est connu (Florence, GDSU, inv. n° 6671 F), demeure inexpliquée 18. Pontormo travailla exclusivement pour la chartreuse de 1523 à 1525", date à laquelle il commença à se consacrer à la chapelle Capponi à Santa Felicita. Sa présence à la chartreuse reste toutefois documentée jusqu'en 1527: il semble en effet que, séduit par la vie sereine menée par les moines, l'artiste soit demeuré en partie au monastère jusqu'à l'automne 1526, continuant à travailler aux fresques 20. Différents documents attestent la présence de Bronzino à ses côtés. De cette époque datent en effet les débuts d'une longue collaboration entre les deux artistes, qui ne prendra fin qu'avec la mort de Pontormo. À la chartreuse, ce dernier vient en aide au jeune homme, qu'il aime comme un fils, et lui esquisse plusieurs dessins préparatoires pour les figures des œuvres qu'il doit exécuter.
C'est à l'aide de ces dessins, dont certains subsistent, que Bronzino peint à fresque un Saint Laurent sur la lunette dominant la porte qui mène de la salle capitulaire au grand cloître de la chartreuse 21. Cette fresque, influencée par les figures sculptées par Michel-Ange pour la Sagrestia Nuova, est très endommagée, de même que le Christ aux outrages représenté de l'autre côté de la porte; ces deux œuvres nous renseignent peu sur ce que fut le style initial de Bronzino. Datables vers 1525-1526, c'est-à-dire peintes après la venue à la chartreuse en 152422 de Vasari qui dut les découvrir plus tard

probablement déjà détériorées, elles satisfirent toutefois pleinement Pontormo 23” (57 – 63), and so forth, on to the Pilgrims at Emmaus.

14 December 2025

[Transcript]
During mass, when the rhythms of the liturgy always seem to give fitting shape to the mists of non-image which otherwise pass restlessly through my head without palpable trace, I learned the way forward for three different paintings.
The first, which will bear the title And God made Eve and I made all I know of you, will be the realization of the great interest I have taken in the positional altitude of Eve's face in Michelangelo's Creation of her, and of Pontormo’s drawing for the same. My painting will more closely follow Pontormo’s, excepting, most notably, that the chest of le vieux will be bare, and, maybe not evidently, but maybe evidently, but in either case at least implicitly, the rest of him barring maybe a shoulder or two will be bare as well. This, I had already known. But what will carry me forward is that Gauguin’s Breton Eve will tell me which pigments I am to use to color the body of Eve, who will be too green to have a legible racial coding. I think there is also yellow, a warm yellow, or a chartreuse; and dark browns, blues, and greens in that painting, which can help me to know how to fill out the rest of the rectangle. And the final thread the following of which will let me know how to work that rectangle into completion with the addition of symbol-objects and symbol-textures and symbol-vines emanating from and locking in place the two figures already in play will be Breton’s Nadja--with resonance, not just incidentally, between that author’s surname and the already-invoked subtext-painting’s title, both of which together are arbitrary and incidental, though, for that, nonetheless significant from the perspective of how the mind links things together, and indeed it was this echo, I think, which called that poem to my mind. Much more deeply, and as with Hantaï’s femelle miroir, Warnock’s analysis of which supplies my only knowing of Nadja, it is a matter of the making of woman, or of “girl” as contemporary art and Jeffrey Deitch would have it, piecewise, a making at worst even machinic. There is a violence therein inherent. And if this violence overflows this painting, then its desolate gloom can be read as a cynical hypothetical much more than any bluntly direct enactment of a masculine painter’s fancy. A cynical hypothetical: and that on the subject of solipsism, which has, for more than 10 years, haunted me; a cynical hypothetical, which is not a position I hold, about the nature of love, but which must be a part of the story of that great redemption whose pen (from Dante and Joyce, even) I will take up to write. This painting, in other words, is a stone that has to be turned over in order to be returned.

The second painting will be entitled Visitation, and the drawing for it will be made using my slider graphing and the dimensions of the Pontormo painting of the same name, from which I will interpolate two great armatures, one left, one right, quite symmetrical in positioning and dimensions, but not in the verticals which constitute them. Those verticals must be plotted out according to the position, according to the composition, rather, of the Pontormo. This is an act of positive reading on my part. Each of these left and right armatures will have for components a female nude, from one or two of the breasts up, through the shoulders, and the gorge, to the frontal face (I can see that of Mary's double so clearly now). The premise of course being that the double of something untouchable is something born of the necessity of touchability. And recall that the double-doubling here, of Mary and Elizabeth, lies even deeper to the heart of my own understanding of how Ludovic Nemo is to double me, and himself to be doubled into Ludovic and Nemo, than does all of Klossowski. Anyway, each of these left and right armatures is to be composed of, in addition to the nude bust which dissolves into drapery as it descends the tableau, also a womb-armature. The proximity of these two smaller womb armatures to each other, the charge between them, and the visual allure of each for its own part, is to be striven to be made to match that of the nudes above. It is that balance of one set of doubles--not of each other--with the other set of doubles--again, not of each other--which is to form the most central, tensional axis of the painting, Visitation.

The third painting is the least of the three. The idea is just that I will use the same manner of drawing from this Visitation to be able, finally, to paint an espresso cup that qualifies as a still life, that is, a compositionally self-sufficient and carried-all-the-way-through painting by its own dessert [?]. And I think I'll be able to do this. by starting from the Manet still life whose glass cup struck me as the only possible starting point, to take the surface of that table and the position of that cup for granted, to align the inner, smaller armature of this painting's armature-pair (nested pair, one inside the other, as with each of the two, left and right, armatures from the Visitation painting). But this time, it is the larger armature which is to be deduced from the smaller, rather than vice-versa. The larger one is to bridge the gap between the smaller one and the rectangular bounds of the painting. to hold each in, locked, necessary-made tension.

And then there are a couple of other observations that also came to me at the same time.

The first is that I would like to make genuine devotional paintings, drawings or paintings of saints, say. Perhaps starting after certain masters, but ultimately fully qualifying as paintings of my own. Ones that can live within the conventions of the genre, such as they are; ones which, that is, I could give to a parish of mine. But what I am saying, about to say, is that such paintings of mine as I describe here--some, it need barely be said, more than others--may make it difficult for a church to see me as a painter to its liking. I thought

about this, and I think, still, to proceed as I have laid out my intentions.
The second general observation is that, such as I conceive them, my paintings are ones about which it can be said that they are, in their every mark, in their every gesture, in their every compositional plan and premise, about style; but that this is not as vapid an observation as it would be if it had been made about other painters to whom it likely has, in fact, been applied. For the following reason: That, if you think that a painter like Julian Schnabel or John Kelsey (with his Renoir suite, or was it Degas, I don't recall) is addressing style in the sole and best possible way in which that can be done in art now, then you've made the mistake of writing off all of the necessary depth--the depth indispensable to any worthwhile consideration of style as-such--lent by that process of submission, of discipleship, of true commitment, of vocation, even, a spiritual question and a sexual question, not least in the Oedipal sense, which has undergirt (and still undergirds!) the way that style works in every age in which it works. In the only way in which it can, that is, if it is to give rise, as only it can, to true and ravishing aesthetic quality (exceptions to every generalization abound: de Kooning, for example, is the opposite counterpart to Schnabel and Kelsey, which proves the margin of their shortcoming).

[Transcript]
Now I just wanted to... make two practical notes, and record the jokes which the priest told today, to be able to send them to Maddie, who will enjoy them. First note that I should tell my mom... that... I also like the Adidas Tokyo shoes. If the sambas can't be found. Or the taekwondo ones, whichever I shall decide, is less similar to the Asics Tigers. Second, that I might also try to tell my mom that something I would really like is an easel, but that the best way to go about this would be to give me... maybe $150 to be able to buy a good one used here in L.A.

Here are Fr. Tomas's jokes today. A man was talking to God, and he said, God, what is a million years to you? And God said, It is only a minute. Then the man said, God, what is a million dollars to you? And God said, It is only one cent. Then the man said... Dear God, could you just give me one cent? God said, Of course. But just wait a minute first.

A second joke, more mysterious as to what it was meant to illustrate. There was a mouse who lived in a farmhouse, and the farmer set a mousetrap for him. The mouse became very distressed and sought the help of the chicken. He asked the chicken to move the mousetrap out of his way, but the chicken said, This may be a matter of life and death to you, but it's not really a problem for me. So the mouse moved on to the sheep. The sheep also told him, It isn't my problem. So he moved on to the cow, who said the same thing. The mouse was completely out of luck. Later that night, the farmer's wife heard the sound of a mousetrap, and she went to investigate. But she didn't bother turning the light on, and so she didn't notice that what the trap had caught was the tip of the tail of a venomous snake, which bit her, and she had to be rushed to the hospital. Her fever couldn't be brought down. The farmer decided to bring her some chicken soup, and went home to kill the main ingredient. The soup didn't help her either. Her condition began to look really serious. So her friends started to visit, and the farmer slaughtered his sheep to be able to feed his guests. Finally, the wife succumbed to the venom. In order to afford the funeral, he had to sell his cow to the slaughterhouse. The end. I don’t know why the priest left it on this morbid note, and I'm not really sure how we were supposed to take it. Maybe it was something about being helpful even when something doesn't seem like your own problem.

Third and last joke: There was a crazy man who thought he was John the Baptist. His ramblings eventually disturbed the neighborhood so much that they called the police, who had him committed. When he got to the asylum, he was put in a cell with another crazy. And he immediately began his spiel: I am John the Baptist, Jesus Christ has sent me. His cell mate just replied, No, I didn't.

15 December 2025

17 December 2025

I think to make use of this detail from Titian’s Pardo Venus--without which that painting would not mean what it means, nor half so much--as a composition within a composition. I was drawn into it by its formal qualities (how the stag has canine or even werewolf anatomy), and made my way out of that vortex by way of a thought--a decisive act which for me corresponds precisely to Matisse’s “discharge” of “emotion,”* though I have yet to pick up my charcoal--the thought, which I can now record, that the painting which will enshroud my repainting of this detail will be my first painting which shows Ludovic and the vieux in the same frame.

[* See the following clippings from Bois’s “The Blinding,” in which for Matisse what is “expressed” is always “emotion,” but not one of “the emotions” which trite convention has us list: “The painter finds himself liberated, and his emotion is fully present in the work. In any case, he has discharged himself of it”; "My goal is to render my emotion. This emotional state is created by the objects that surround me and react in me: all that lies between the horizon and myself, including myself. Very often I place myself in the picture and I'm aware of what exists behind me. I express space and the objects in it as naturally as if I were standing with just the sea and the sky before me, in other words, the simplest things in the world”; “What he sees, the "reality" of his vision, what he wanted to render in his painting is not of a visual, but of a sentimental, an emotional nature, the expression of which he pursues "above all." Matisse's conception of memory and the unconscious is Proustian, not Freudian: "The unconscious enrichment of the artist is accomplished by all he sees, which he translates pictorially without thinking about it. An acacia on Vésubie, its movement, its svelte grace, led me perhaps to imagine the body of a dancing woman”; “he saw that if he wanted to express an emotion subliminally—a specific emotion—he would have to organize his canvas as a kind of perfectly "hierarchized" war machine (as he so appropriately describes Cézanne's equilibrium of forces), each element having to count differently in the production of this expression.”]

Here is how: The stag must be shorn of its antlers (though I am not, for this, so dogmatic: Elsewhere, the stag as a transpictorial figure can retain full femininity and/or full masculinity, contingent upon the case at hand). The postures, especially those of the head and neck, of the two personal figures in the foreground must be made to correspond to those of the hunting dogs, but not one-to-one in a simple mirroring or a simple inversion; the interplay must be more intricate than that, and the tie between composition and composition-within the stronger for it. As to how to pull off this nesting, it occurred to me to look back to the Rubens boarhunt which I saw a couple months ago at the Norton Simon, for more reasons than just the obvious one: I had recorded that composition, I recall, for reasons chiefly of the way in which it nests a form (with a silhouette not unlike Titian’s hunt-group’s), turgid with motion, within a rectangle (not unlike Titian’s painting’s, though Rubens’s nesting is much

larger, in relative terms, and for that, in my opinion, the superior composition: more tensile, more spring-loaded, more active and more static).

In trying to find the drawing from the Norton Simon pasted above, it occurred to me to remark upon this (certainly incidental) echo (if it can even be called that) which, though tenuous, nevertheless teaches me something I can use.

And, as I have said, I will entitle either a painting such as this or an exhibition which includes it The living and the dead;

And I can paint another, perhaps hung if this one is propped or vice versa, perhaps landscape in format but still having the pasted aluminum in the lower section to prove the point, perhaps in place of

the espresso cup painting on the aluminum a Flemish Primitive Oriental carpet soaked in oil paint, or the tile (with its distinctive pattern) of Brasserie Lipp as though seen from a face pressed to that patinated floor. And, particularly in the latter case but not necessarily so, in place of the honey kiss there may be an engraved-aluminum-stamped lump of wax-infused duck fat, too.

20 December 2025

Having held momentarily onto a semi-throwaway detail about a Cézanne / de Kooning chiasm for the two self-portraits of Ludovic Nemo for which I made first studies yesterday (paint in the colors and manner of Cézanne's watercolor melon still life for the one with the de Kooning sculpture, paint in the colors and manner of de Kooning's glazier and a related study for the one with Cézanne's sculpture), I found a way to armature-resolve the Self-portrait of Ludovic Nemo with Clamdigger, but it really took a lot of thinking.

The colors came relatively quickly: The modeling of the melon (and its unified green-ness will be how I construct the Clamdigger; the peaches of the foremost ground, wood interchangeable with skin, will allow me to paint the face; the apple's pop of red and yellow gives me the paintbrush; and the iridescent chorus of verticals that is the still life's background lets me paint the window and wall and mirror-line in back of mine (with the possible exception that the blue of Cézanne's glass may serve for the open-onto-the-optical-wonder-world that is partially what my window stands for). But here is what I had begun to feel would not come before it came: That there are two armatures, superposed one over the other, one smaller and therefore, as Julia Yerger would say, "receded," and they will be linked one to the other in that the foremost vertical of the receded one will coincide with the backmost vertical of the more proximate one, and this jointure will be the vertical that plots the position and height of the Clamdigger.

For the other painting, something perhaps similar, but the two armatures will not share central-frontal alignment; the receded one will be right of center and lowered, and the more proximate one right of center and raised; and--one last--their verticals will be turned inside-out, so that the verticals of the more proximate one depend (as in pendant) downward from the lower disk, and the verticals of the receded one radiate upward from the upper disk.

There is a question of whether to wheel-transpose (my old tool) each of the two palette-source photos, so that they become chord-source photos, transposed so that each strikes the same note of full-bodied green which I have always held in my head as central to, or at least, along with purple and red, core to, the Freikorperkardinal / “His transalpine eminency.” The blue in this glazier study, a high-keyed turquoise, would become that luminous green, and the blue-green of the melon would likewise become a more full-throated green-green. The question is whether I thereby gain a too-stable color-world and lose a referentiality which I would otherwise treasure--or would I despise it, and the whole pair of paintings for it?--there is the rub.

The central gesture of these “self-portraits,” the Picasso-encoded brush in Ludovic Nemo’s mouth, is the centerpin of a gambit that gets me around the twin uncircumnavigabilities of Cézanne and de Kooning--all at once, in the pulling-into-planes which is the decisive motion-emotion that my orbital-planar armatures pull off and then exude (“then” here being just a dependence upon the semi-imagined time-scale of their apperception).

The same motion-emotion, in executive accompaniment of very different gestures, is available at all times and everywhere in the service of bringing-unto-parturition of other paintings--beginning with the Freikorperkardinal, perhaps, or with the Creation of Eve, and eventually also, say, the Self-portrait of Ludovic Nemo at the age of twenty-seven in which he will wear the beard of the Paul McCartney of “Oh! Darling.”

3 January 2025

Where am I, where am I, where am I? Where have I been? Why such struggle to put back together something which feels in the fold of pursuit* after not so long away?

“Dans tes cheveux, flot brun qui submerge le peigne
Sur tes seins frissonnants, ombrés d’ambre, que baigne
 L’odeur des varechs morts dans les galets le soir,
Je veux laisser tomber par gouttes les essences
Vertigineuses et, plis froids, les patiences
Orientales, en fleurs d’or sur tulle noir.

Éventrant les ballots du pays de la peste,
J’y trouverai, trésor brodé, perlé, la veste
 Qui cache mal ta gorge et laisse luire nus
Tes flancs. Et dans tes doigts je passerai des bagues
Où, sous le saphir, sous l’opale aux lueurs vagues,
 Dorment les vieux poisons aux effets inconnus.

Dans l’opium de tes bras, le haschisch de ta nuque,
Je veux dormir, malgré les cris du monde eunuque
 Et le poignard qui veut nous clouer cœur sur cœur.
Qu’entre tes seins, faisant un glissement étrange,
Ton sang de femme à mon sang d’homme se mélange,
La mort perpétuera l’éclair d’amour vainqueur !”

Thus spake in his Coffret de santal--calling it a “sultanerie”--Charles Cros,* associate of Mallarmé, Verlaine and Rimbaud, favorite poet of the recently-deceased Brigitte Bardot in her Proust questionnaire which I happened across flipping through a book I own. I find in Cros a perfect example of the “1880s psychedelia” that has been on my mind lately because Saoirse Bertram said (or reposted) that it is “in” this year, 1960s psychedelia being “out”; I wondered if what that label made me think of--roughly, the inner-mind meanderings of des Esseintes, laced at all points with sensuous luxury--are all that it means, or whether there is not necessarily always more, and not just more but also new, to find in this vein.
Opium et haschisch: dreams of the Orient which reached their fever-pitch in these years but still held latent a “last” flowering in Matisse in Morocco, the blue, the light: the dazzle-unto-panchromacy in the sun there but also the notable refraction of all of that through a panchromatic blue, perhaps traceable to the moment when the violet in the folds of only those manteaux de la vierge painted with the purest Afghani lapis became, in its shot-silk superposition of two colors at once, the first real step toward (and in this first step the first real conclusion, inclusion, unto) a pantochromatikon. And if this blue were not enough, there is the rose light from through the

screen cited by Hantaï, the one whose immaterial glow entranced Matisse while he was at work on Vence.

Matisse: He of the vocable-mouth, as abstracted by Louis Aragon. This morning I caught my hand at a certain angle and a certain position in the mirror, recognized in its silhouette the contour of a Matisse hand (which? That of L'Asie? No--the "burmese hand," also from Aragon, but this one abstracted by Matisse himself), and thought of collecting all such formula-hands: the Formalist rayonnement whose allure is--still--not disprovably present tucked deep behind anything with any allure whatsoever in the whole personal imprint-history of all my attractions to any artifact of art (generalized to generously encompass all Kant's "beautiful"--this following a point which, though only trivial and natural, Daniel Neofetou took the time to trace in a reconsideration of Greenberg's less-than-graceful cusp-tottering between "late modern" and "postmodern"; it was this same writer, Neofetou, who via Tatol brought to me the below-mentioned lens of analysis of "nows").

But before Matisse, the Orient was opium et haschisch: Cros in an already-illustrious line of stoned dreamers. Among them, no evocation by Baudelaire or Mallarmé or Huysmans or Flaubert, prodigious as his Herodiade or Salammbô may be, can replace, for me, those paintings of Moreau whose form Proust and Huysmans each tried in his turn to conjure in words; I need the paintings, the one absent from the Hammer and the one pasted below, because I need always images in which to voluptuate and am unsatisfied to build them myself out of too-vague (if ingenious, even if unsurpassable) words (Mallarmé's, utopia, then, is a vision of the world and its salvation which will for me always be

incomplete--and if Mondrian's painting-wall-room-house-city is, too, then at least my attaching myself to the latter links up better with my existing reliance upon images to propagate into new images which can only thereby fill the world until it is beautiful.

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And in his “Oaristys” a line-image is so immemorial--so primordial, so eternal--that it reminds me of glimpses (a glimpse is a sensory aggregate, not limited to the plane of sight, which, like a painting as understood by “re-Symbolism,” is a multifaceted object, such as John Henry Newman sets out to diagram under the sign of “the idea”; his is a view toward letting Christianity inhabit said category, but the diagram is generally applicable, and quite lucid) which I retain from under moonlight in the fraîcheur of a desert night--I retain them, have retained them under my chest which breathes every breast since then somehow through them, even if until now I did not remember them in the line at hand: “Sous ta gorge glacée et sur tes flancs nerveux / Les frissons de Vénus perlaient ta peau nacrée.” And, as a seed grows a crystal, outward from there I see all at once and gradually my lover in every line: “Tu m’avais dit: ‘Je suis à toi si tu me veux’; / Et, frémissante, à mes baisers … Tes baisers inquiets de lionne joueuse …”
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7 January 2026

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“Ass-first into the horse-dealer’s home”
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Both are based on the entombment, with silhouettes nearly identical;

but Ludovic’s back (which is mine, and Bella’s) is to the viewer in each, and the three uncles are in the cruciform semi-surrounding relationship to him so that we get two of their profiles and one of them frontal-visage
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I see these as predominantly grayscaled, but with touches of iridescence, as in Manet’s asparagus.

I have been confused about the strength of my attraction to Cézanne spanning the last month. Anxious, that is, about this resurgence of interest in a register of immersion in the weeds of sensation which I thought I had come to an acceptance in laying aside.

I think I finally found the right way to embrace it, a position which is also richer than “there is always something to learn (about line, form, etc.) from a drawing/painting-from-life practice,” which is still true but much easier to say.

Deliverance in the form of three touchstones:

Duchamp and a painting of his like King and queen with swift nudes (I make this choice over runner-up Young man and girl in spring, which, at a glance, has much more to say to my painting):

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Lastly, and with greatest strength because of its position at the root: Cézanne’s Baigneuses series, and all the mutually-inconsistent ink spilled on the subject in the century and a half since the series began. How their facture did not ever involve nude models posed en plein air, and how this fact alone disqualifies these paintings from the greater part of anything ever philosophized on the subject of Cézanne.

bottom3 January 2025

Where am I, where am I, where am I? Where have I been? Why such struggle to put back together something which feels in the fold of pursuit* after not so long away?

“Dans tes cheveux, flot brun qui submerge le peigne
Sur tes seins frissonnants, ombrés d’ambre, que baigne
 L’odeur des varechs morts dans les galets le soir,
Je veux laisser tomber par gouttes les essences
Vertigineuses et, plis froids, les patiences
Orientales, en fleurs d’or sur tulle noir.

Éventrant les ballots du pays de la peste,
J’y trouverai, trésor brodé, perlé, la veste
 Qui cache mal ta gorge et laisse luire nus
Tes flancs. Et dans tes doigts je passerai des bagues
Où, sous le saphir, sous l’opale aux lueurs vagues,
 Dorment les vieux poisons aux effets inconnus.

Dans l’opium de tes bras, le haschisch de ta nuque,
Je veux dormir, malgré les cris du monde eunuque
 Et le poignard qui veut nous clouer cœur sur cœur.
Qu’entre tes seins, faisant un glissement étrange,
Ton sang de femme à mon sang d’homme se mélange,
La mort perpétuera l’éclair d’amour vainqueur !”

Thus spake in his Coffret de santal--calling it a “sultanerie”--Charles Cros,* associate of Mallarmé, Verlaine and Rimbaud, favorite poet of the recently-deceased Brigitte Bardot in her Proust questionnaire which I happened across flipping through a book I own. I find in Cros a perfect example of the “1880s psychedelia” that has been on my mind lately because Saoirse Bertram said (or reposted) that it is “in” this year, 1960s psychedelia being “out”; I wondered if what that label made me think of--roughly, the inner-mind meanderings of des Esseintes, laced at all points with sensuous luxury--are all

that it means, or whether there is not necessarily always more, and not just more but also new, to find in this vein.
Opium et haschisch: dreams of the Orient which reached their fever-pitch in these years but still held latent a “last” flowering in Matisse in Morocco, the blue, the light: the dazzle-unto-panchromacy in the sun there but also the notable refraction of all of that through a panchromatic blue, perhaps traceable to the moment when the violet in the folds of only those manteaux de la vierge painted with the purest Afghani lapis became, in its shot-silk superposition of two colors at once, the first real step toward (and in this first step the first real conclusion, inclusion, unto) a pantochromatikon. And if this blue were not enough, there is the rose light from through the screen cited by Hantaï, the one whose immaterial glow entranced Matisse while he was at work on Vence.

Matisse: He of the vocable-mouth, as abstracted by Louis Aragon. This morning I caught my hand at a certain angle and a certain position in the mirror, recognized in its silhouette the contour of a Matisse hand (which? That of L’Asie? No--the “burmese hand,” also from Aragon, but this one abstracted by Matisse himself), and thought of collecting all such formula-hands: the Formalist rayonnement whose allure is--still--not disprovably present tucked deep behind anything with any allure whatsoever in the whole personal imprint-history of all my attractions to any artifact of art (generalized to generously encompass all Kant’s “beautiful”--this following a point which, though only trivial and natural, Daniel Neofetou took the time to trace in a reconsideration of Greenberg’s less-than-graceful cusp-tottering between “late modern” and “postmodern”; it was this same writer, Neofetou, who via Tatol brought to me the below-mentioned lens of analysis of “nows”).

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8 January 2026

That "suspect pleasures" might be a good title of a later exhibition of paintings. Thinking about the extraordinary stringency (what I've called "excruciating") of Nancy's prose in a work like "being singular plural." Also thinking of what I've called Klimt-indulgence-via-Grotjahn, a matter of distillation of bare-minimum paint-itself details, chords, structures, etc., all isolated for their own exquisite sense of lusciousness, lushness, indulgence, volupté even. Not that all such pleasures are suspect—one need only open to any page of "sexistence"—but just to nod to the raising of the stakes of the things from which my oils-on-aluminum derive their charge, such as narrative, relational composition, autobiography, technique (tradition, not to say classicism), bravura handling, Eyckian or Venetian jewel tones, technologically-enabled surface qualities—or, all in a word, "allure."

Wanted to jot down a list of some painters I have really liked recently: Julia Yerger, Mitchell Kehe, and most lately Soren Hope, though this last might not quite meet the bar, if being a better painter than Christina Quarles doesn't get her out of Quarles' same vein.

Brett Goodroad almost makes the cut, but doesn't; though this may ultimately just be a matter of insignificant subjective taste, my heuristics at cross-purposes.

11 January 2026

I don't want the following to be all that I say on each of these subjects; hopefully, I can flesh them out later after arriving home; but just in case:

First, two things about my paintings.

On the creation of Eve with Breton Eve: That when the first washes are being put on the aluminum after the silverpoint contours are transferred from the drawing, that the panel can be turned upside down and some paint applied very liquid and thinly so that it drips; and I want these drips to be kind of the only thing that paints what ends up being the upper region, near the old man's head. And on this sparsely painted (or at places non-painted) ground, the old man's head can be painted in a broken hand, a paint-hand that resembles the pencil strokes of Cézanne, or even the striped synthetism of that Irishman in Pont Aven. Whereas the lower bodies--that is, not just Eve herself, but also the Adamic torso of the old man--can be painted more in Gauguin's own hand from the painting (Breton Eve) I've already linked to this one (And God made Eve and I made all I know of you, or something). I think that the gravity-defying drips would be good just here, not something to indulge in globally, but something unique to mark this one; and that the rift I'm talking about (between the upper region and the rest of the painting) is a good polarity-axis, a difference to begin with, to later be counterbalanced and sealed into place by other, contrary textures, patterns, structures, et cetera.

A second thing about my paintings: I speak often about my interest in doing something along the margins of what has been known as romans à clef, or autofiction: the space between these two rather overtheorized forms. And that's where my idea of “the autobiography of Ludovic Nemo” and “self-portrait of Ludovic Nemo,” et cetera, come from. Yet, for all this, one might say, from my existing plans, that I have little to no interest in putting my own biography into my paintings. I was thinking about this, and I realized that I disagree with that thought, and that all of the “autobiography” of it comes at the level of style, and allure, the things that I'm drawn towards, the “suspect pleasures” that I insist on charging, if only to hold them in a flickering negation-affirmation. I think that this is the only way it works. Nothing in painting, or at least my painting, sits well if it is easily full; it has to be, at once, utterly emptied and completely overloaded. This is the same thing that was at the core of the Mallarmé reading that Landy often put forward: denial of the simple major key, return of the same in a transposed (or transfigured) minor, so that the tonic finally glories in its own negation, and in this glory it cannot be anything but over-present.

One more thing. I don't know if this applies to the Michelangelo-entombment horse dealers painting or paintings that I already mentioned, or whether it's yet another version of the same concept on a smaller scale, and, for some reason, square. But I want to use the

Dremel in one of these versions, just to single out those specific double-dealing contours that Nagel mentioned, the ones that only Michelangelo's superb lavishing of attention on the drawing could have given rise to, the contours that give the lie to the basic verity that what a contour is is a demarcation between form and ground. (This verity's negation is itself trite, has been since at least Wittgenstein or some logician from the time of Symbolism's first flowering; still, I think there's fun to be had with it.) Speaking of the Dremel: I think that I am coming upon a way to make it do what I once said, speaking slightly out over ahead of my toes to Joe, that I want it to do--namely, that I loved the resistance it applied* to the force of specificity or originality or personality of a given line, in other words to the particular modulation of tensile strength proper to a given line.

[* This affordance of resistance is directly analogous to what Paul Sietsema told me he liked about linen as rough as the kind that we special-ordered from Simon Liu for him: that it gives him something to work against, "provides resistance." And when he said this, I knew him to be speaking on a plane that was completely personal, maybe not quite solipsistic but at least hermetic, as it indulges in "the personal" as though on a plane parallel to the legible, "major" plane of the work's functional reality. And in speaking so frankly of the reality that he (only he, the painter) was sensitive to and was operating in, it reminded me of the way that Mark Grotjahn seems to speak so concretely of the pulls and pushes that sustain his engagement with his own painting which, as it has always struck me, would never occur to most painters to be sensitive to. In Sietsema's case, the insistence on the material reality and the personal sensitivity of the works' facture makes sense, because the works would collapse if all they were were transpositions of photographs. What they are instead, of course, is very good paintings, and a good painting is always in a relationship with its own bodiliness, its own bursting-forth materiality, the juice of its color, and so forth, the things that Sietsema invoked, even if only to put it under a reservation. (I'll should retrieve the quote, but it was something like, "the things he would be thinking about if he were an abstract painter"--saying it in this way even as he avers that they are the things that he's thinking about when he's making those "Carriage" paintings. Here it is: "CB: You continue to return to a European history of modernist abstract painting, and you are preoccupied with the idea of composition. / PS: I am playing the part of the retro formalist when I lay the imagery from the digital files of the torn euros over the found abstract compositions. I like to get into the headspace I imagine I'd be in if I were making an abstract painting: a pool of purple here, a swoosh of pink there, a dab or two of turquoise placed just so. Intuitively, I'd be balancing elements of the composition, perhaps trading this off with pure gesture, keeping one eye on light and dark relationships, weight, those types of things. But instead of doing this primal, perhaps existential, perhaps purely formal activity, relying entirely on intuition, I start with a

painting that isn’t mine but that I have chosen, or rather shopped for.” When I read that line from an interview in ARTnews with Connie Butler, on the morning before I was to make a delivery to his studio, it made me think that I should be more assertive in my own elective affinities with structures, patterns, forms, balances, compositions-- from painters that, as I was saying recently, really tickle me, such as Julia Yerger, Mitchell Kehey and Nate Boyce--even if those things I choose to distill from paintings of theirs are things that would absolutely never be recognized as such. This reification of ephemeral affinity is a real animating force for my interest in painting. And to maintain that interest in a way that gives life to my Autobiography of Ludovic Nemo, for example, I ought to lean into the fact that such “plastic values” are among the fullest and most turgid planes of play of any true personal expression that's going on when I paint (here I mean “expression” in Matisse’s sense, rather than the Germans’, or, I think, Andre Breton’s.]

A separate note: some things to add to my plans of a thing I could write about Theo's show that opened last night.

Early on, have to say that it’s one tiny room, that pretty much everyone is a graffiti writer and/or a tattoo artist, that purpose-made objets d’art blend in alongside ephemera from their makers’ other lives, neutralizing the question of which practice is marginal to which: for this show about taboo & subculture, the underground is the spotlight [hm].

Maybe nice to start with getting there: At first, it seemed that the address had led me to... What was it, a Pentecostal church? And navigating past the rusted trucks to get to a porch draped with half-stripped bodies getting blackout inked.

One thing to talk about near the middle how the show’s quiet moments set up the surprising punches. For example, [Theo's friend's painting] is a haunting little exercise in restraint: an empty path, a minimum of admixture to a single shade of violet, a painting made, I was told, with very little paint, thinned until each stroke of the brush subtracted more paint than it applied, so that the image was largely constructed in the negative, out of glimpses of white ground through the violet wash.

I lost my sentence, but that was one moment of quiet, a delicately hollowed-out glimpse of the uncanny that additionally serves to tee the viewer up for the adjacent works’ concentrated maximalism, the extreme density of the hanging heightening their frisson: __ ___ built a house of cards with a novelty deck with a different topless photo on each card. This pile of images is built up to almost completely obscure its even more shocking structural support: The pyramid is built around a small explosive branded “bin Laden Noggin,” complete with virulent caricature--a firework that made minor headlines at the

height of the “War on Terror” and which appears now as a remarkable four-inch condensation of the Bush era’s id.
___’s work is exemplary of a tactic common to much of the work on view: start from genre tropes, in this case atavism and the classic tattoo pin-up; then key up the bluntest impacts to such an extreme that the whole thing practically subverts itself. [I think this is a bit too abstract] Toward this end, the art-adjacent fields that The Enduring mines are ripe for the picking / To supply these impacts, the art-adjacent fields which The Enduring musters are more than game: Graffiti has thrived on the scatological since at least Pompeii, and tattoo art seems to live to outdo itself in its ever-counterintuitive lack of self-censorship. Installed as “Art-art” with a healthy wariness of pretense, the result is an aesthetic that winks at you while it turns your stomach. Witness the absurdly exaggerated physiognomy of an erotic manga girl who doubles as a cigarette case [?], tucked with a flamingo lighter under the ceiling’s edge--as though to hide a secret, as though the tiny room weren’t already heavy with smoke and libido.)
In this improvised give-and-take between shock and restraint, the mutually-amplifying effect can quickly turn from cheeky to menacing. The longer you look, the more you feel there’s more going on here than you understand. What overuse discolored that caseless pillow? Was that spent round always perched on the corner of the plinth, or did it just appear? It’s this Lynchian effect that makes Theodore Adams’s ___, perhaps The Enduring’s subtlest work, one of its most memorable: an oil painting of a pilotless tugboat that could also be a Nile barge, awash in a sickly glow from within that turns its water oil-thick. Its emptied subject seems to have emerged of its own inertia out of its darkly shining surface, caked with untold detritus.
Other glimpses worth rendering? The fact that you can plant your feet anywhere in the room and just by turning your head see all the works present at a reasonable viewing distance: soiled pillow to the left, tatted boxing dummy to the right, dirty pictures in the rafters, jewel-box painting at shin height. I need to talk about the older woman, and her drawings, and how the characters don't quite sort themselves out, and that they toe this line with such consistency that it becomes their preeminent quality (it becomes their chief appeal, if I don't want to say “preeminent quality”). And when I talk about the organizers, is when I should say that Leif had become known for his tattooed silicone casts of cats found dead on New York sidewalks, that the boxing dummy extends the effect of their excuse for deliriously improvised draftsmanship onto a confrontation with comparably blunt impact of quite a new kind, its comically aggressive stare feeling both completely alien to the sculptural medium and fully at home within it, much as the full-body cat death masks did... And so on. What I think would be a good note to close on, in which I nod to the fact that the past year has been marked in the art world by much hair-pulling and doomsaying, one major player in the gallery scene quitting after another, and how a show like this is exactly what this soul-searching moment is telling us to look for. If it's harder and harder

to scratch the itch for killer paintings inside the white cubes on Western Ave., it's worth taking a look in darker corners--starting with the wood shop behind the decommissioned church. (So that's how I want to end it, basically.)

22 January 2026

A couple of ideas for parts of paintings that I had while listening to YHWH Nailgun, specifically the EP that has “Too bright to see” and “Look at me, I’m a rainer.”

First, the line “stretched torso” (or “torso stretched”) made me want to build out a painting from the middle, Hantaï-Panses style, beginning with a drawing not unlike the Pontormo torso that has been hanging over my blender for a year or two; but I want to add gradations, or rather transposable units like as in a polymer: What I mean is additional bones, vertebrae, muscles, maybe, extending the muscled serpentinata back, and also another view from the front somehow, but I don't know what the limbs (let alone the head) would do on that one. And I don't want to get into body horror, more just an imagination of “angel,”* like the more strident Michelangelo (the Michelangelo of the frescoes, rather than the panel paintings or the drawings).

[* On 24 January 2026 I read, in a John Updike review of Milan Kundera’s Book of Laughter and Forgetting, a coding of “angel” which I think is usefully evocative even if it doesn’t exude as much weight as the “angel” of Rilke’s Duino Elegies, for example: For Updike’s Kundera, “angel” means something absolute and therefore cold, something not incapable of laughter but whose laughter must be hollow and metallic because it is in every case “perfect” unto an extreme which is supra-human, transhuman, and therefore inhuman, showing us, say, a visible face of that hypothetical or that future which Kleist so prophetically broached in his Marionettentheater story--when, I mean, via Boehm or something (here I am just guessing), he makes of marionettes a sort of prefigure for an idea that people now trashily and too-late apply to “A.I.”.]

Second idea, and I think this is the best one: An olive branch, alone on a small expanse of plane, not necessarily alone in the picture frame, but alone & low on a flat surface, “low” so that the still life reads more as on the floor than on a tabletop, though it ought to retain ambiguity in this regard. An olive branch, and off to the side animal dejecta, featherings and skinnings from ducks and other gamy beasts (fawns, rabbits). And here, an atmosphere and application related to Oliveira's sled arrangements, and to the Phoebe Nesgos side of Nate Boyce. There can be colors like the ones from certain YHWH Nailgun album covers: gold, iridescence with pastels (say, like the reflection of a cold flash on dimpled graphite markings, or similar

polychromies from other metals than graphite with other alchemical readings, silver, gold, copper, lead, and so forth). But these pastels should only be the rims or halo-glows to predominating earthier tones. What I mean is I don't want a neon painting, I want a gray painting, whose grayness is intensified by fringes of color.
Third idea, which I'm not sure about, but this might contribute to a certain moment of depiction of the old man, the master--if someday I come to want to double him in order to get closer to him or deeper into him, then this is a way to dualize the pair, both of the doubles looking up to heaven, like a Christ in agony or a Christ on the cross, or really like a Prometheus, with that extremely deep plane bridging eye socket and brow, which is also to say an extensively protruding prow, turned up to heaven; and it is the shape of this brow, a variation imposed on it between the two doubles, that is to constitute the space between the doubles: One is to be straight, straight-angled like the prow of a tent or a rainfly; the other is to have some kind of curve, like an Oceanian longhouse. Both are to pitch upward like a ship in a storm.
All three of these ideas because I was listening to this music again for the first time in almost a year, the first time really since seeing them perform, and I felt that the textures of their sound had something in common with what I am trying to do (or perhaps with what I am incidentally doing quite aside from what I am trying to do) by using aluminum and neoprene, and rabbit skin glue, "the living and the dead." In a time of the imagination of the time after time, something that doesn't really bear the name “neo-pagan” (which Pitchfork applied to name a component of the still-minimal individuality of Oklou), but rather pries into the most charged cluster of the so-called seeds of the Word, namely, the cluster right around the rupture of history itself (that is, the Incarnation); and inhabiting this cluster, there is all of the Gnostic writings, and the Mithraic cults, and the Eleusinian mysteries, and everything that makes Paul Klee’s Engel so different from so many others, namely, that thing that that angel shares with Pontormo's and Michelangelo's injections of the Transalpine, Rilke’s too when he invokes his Angel and the oracular words that flow out from that breach open modernity up to something beyond, to something Heidegger-turning, something Stein-basic, something in the texture and the gesture which can only be said to be in the “word” if the word in question is the Word before all word. And it is only in gesture upon texture, with image wriggling out from cracks and fringes and margins by fits and repetitions and glimpses, only thus that this that I'm speaking of can be painted.

24 January 2026

“Rectify” the composition of this with the golden ratio and take it as a pretext to indulge in da Vinci flesh, fake mink*, oklou/europa icicle fur, papal red & transalpinerkardinal green & violet, etc., all in/into thickened rsg over rubbed-raw aluminum (solid aluminum, like at least 1/8 in blocks, if possible)

[* This was misleading shorthand for a quality that I feel in the Tintoretto at the Kimbell, in da Vinci’s Lady with an Ermine, in Amalia Ulman’s Heavy Traffic story that mentions Sint-Martens-Latem (“My Dog, My Husband, My Son”) and her interview with Isabella Rosselini, and in the below works by Winona Sloane Odette that I found because this was a duo show with Mitchell Kehe, at Castle, where I didn’t know he’d been.]

(And--why not:)

Idea for a large-ish canvas:
Stretch raw Paris onto key panel
Festool sand to open its grain, maybe make some holes
Saturate with 50/50 gesso
Unstretch and set aside
Stretch neoprene on same or larger key panel
3 coats pva, tighten
Thick RSG coat and while still wet restretch gessoed Paris on top / on face
Polyurethane? Oil washes?
Then begin delineating / figuring / gesturing: Dremmel? Vine?
Turpentine-loaded brush?

I liked this thing from an old press release about Julia Yerger's paintings, particularly the part about how applying Kricfalusian or H-B-style lighting to a "space" (without any prior spatial qualities) can give a sort of existential crisis to the marks that had been inhabiting that space: It gives those marks borderline-entity status, a complicated, flickering sort of weight and plasticity. I think this

quality is delicious in its cusp state in these paintings, but I think it could be milked much further. Maybe when I make it to the current small group she's in at Chateau Shatto I'll find what I hope for.

'Through patiently (painstakingly) layering, Yerger achieves tricks which are easy with the aid of a backlit screen, but not IRL. Elements emit, glow, radiate. Each painting features light sources, which at once addle the initial abstraction. Certain elements are highlighted, often acting as puncta for understanding, respite amidst the chaotic surroundings, using attention grabbing tactics of animation – "look here!", or "I matter!"' [emphasis mine].

25 January 2026

I like that if I include "Self-portrait of Ludovic Nemo at the age of twenty-seven" (2026) [maybe this is the one from the Oasis still? No--it has the Duchamp fur, though--Actually, maybe this is the one with the Paul McCartney beard] and "Self-portrait of Ludovic Nemo at the age of thirty" (2026) [I thought this was the one with the Paul McCartney beard, but really that's "age twenty-seven"; then, perhaps the other performatively dated self-portrait ought to be from age twenty-four] in the same The Autobiography of Ludovic Nemo exhibition, there is a pleasant sensitization of the notion of style via a modulation on the sub-notion of style-moment.

Another idea for a canvas:

Stretch black neoprene on a stretcher, pad and sand coats of diluted until it's really white (or just do one coat); then I can plumb-line-and-charcoal an armature-composite, spray with fixative,

Dremel an underdrawing, size with RSG, and proceed to paint (?).

ESPRESSO CUP

Notes

I think it is that the various persons / actors, of which there is one allotted to each oscillation, are phantasms who constitute themselves from out of water and then in some way or another pass through Ludovic's room as he sits in it with his back to the armoire. If the initial conception of the oscillatory structure, whereby each chapter begins with the congealment from water and ends in the dissolution, becomes tiresome, then perhaps I can follow the more winding rhythm of a récit like The Blower or like When the Time Comes--that is, trace crossings, follow upon lines-of-flight naturally, pass off followings as naturally as attention slips from one thing to the next (more naturally, that is, than a baton), so that reminiscence will be what brings the many congealments into the ultimate scansion-order (too roughly (this limits imagination): A boxer enters and lies on his wooden floor in the attitude of a knockout, exits and prepares for his match, recalls having woken up in a bath, then recalls being in Ludovic's sparse room, and during this last recollection there is an opportunity for attention to slide off the boxer and back onto Ludovic, who in turn can remember the boxer's exit, followed by some other entrance, and so forth).

Oscillating Structure

From 7 and 8 November 2024, these plans were quite clear to me:
"[7 November 2024]
Maybe I can reconceive (rewrite, reframe--these are not as good: What I really mean is "rethink," which registers the fact that no extant materiality (exscription) stands to change) "espresso cup" as the very oscillation between love and art, an oscillation that also rhythmically carves out arcs traversing quotidian phenomena (the materiality of living) and the phenomenon of the quotidian and its ecstatic scansion / inter-irruption (in other words, all facets of the lived existential analytic).
Applied: If I ever find a way of stacking and scanning my notes and thoughts such that their conscious-unconscious form becomes

legible (I've been thinking recently more and more about the pivotal turn marked by Finnegans Wake to reconceive literary-materiality--all art, perhaps--as precisely the obverse of consciousness, the obverse of thought, the complement of whatever would be the "content" of point-of-view), just for example if I ever get around to performing the operation of spacing out my undelivered letters to Bella and interpelleting the interstices between with layer upon layer of the charged material I've so far semi-rendered by any means, then, maybe the realization of all I've long sought under the sign of "espresso cup" will be the very movement, the oscillation, the rhythm, that traces repeatedly--with the implication of this repetition being an implicit ad infinitum, an Hantaïan rose--a trajectory from one letter (one distilled crystalline moment of enacted love, in such form as of which I am capable) to the next one, a trajectory that might look every time something like this: Beginning in that kinetic love, that trace-inscription of an act of real love between two persons; descending from there ("waking up") into a self-reflective discourse of love (this leg, this first step of descent, would be some little sub-line of thinking from the "Communion" linearization, perhaps); finding some way (every time some new way) of pragmatically thinking a transmutation between love and art, and thus performing (again and again, once per oscillation, once, that is, per letter) a turn from love-in-principle to art-in-principle; and then, as proof of the pragmatical reality of this understanding, showing the function of art in this way by means of some instance from among my pantheon, whether Hantaï or Pound or Balthus or Rilke or Bonnard or Mallarmé or Redon or Baudelaire or (Proust's) Moreau or Dante or the Sicilians or the Troubadours or the transalpine axis (spanning Italy, Provence, Switzerland, Germany, and Flanders, etc.) of "early renaissance" painters, and, perhaps, leaving off here in their mists. And then rounding out the trough of this (corkscrewing, higher-dimensional) sinusoid, a turn from a "narrator-meeting-artwork" ekphrasis to something more apophatic, some more mystical (peakingly mystical, I guess) crystallization of purest light; and then, once this light has been traversed, there will be each time a reascent to bridge back to the next incantatory registration of real love--and this is, perhaps, the mobilization of the understanding that real love is the sharing of the ecstatic experience of light itself, and this sharing takes any number of different forms each time; though right now I can't think of any good examples, the task here is to enact practicable means to slowly but surely build back up to the perfect, unconscious sleeplike state in which real life, life in love, can resume its dream.

Much is yet unresolved. How, for example, can I string this out into form? With a very clean narrativization like Sebald's nameless interlocutor who spatializes Austerlitz, or with a mistier net of reduplicating characters upon which to diffract the twinkling net as in Fosse, or with a yet more nebulous (yet more combinatorialized) cast like something out of Kan-Sperling? And who are my characters, my voices, anyway? Are they my artists and poets? If they are, can I speak through them or can I realize them with only

their words, and if the latter, how can I materialize the space into which they will speak? I feel I need to do more than Dante did in order to really render it real; if I “did Dante” it would read as a pretentious failure of the fanfictionalizing impulse; and, I need to avoid a default to a first-person narrator who resembles me, and just as surely I need to avoid a default to an easy “he” who is me (or is even just so much like me as to be a suffocating painter)--So--what am I left with? A place, perhaps, like the transalpine spring where Rilke’s mountain gentian is found; or--better--I feel this might be it: Maybe the real constant, the real “narrator,” could be a string of baths and pools which functions as a “clearing” in the Nemerov-Heidegger-Tarkovsky sense. Perhaps each “waking up” is the populating of this space, and each “going back down” is its emptying back out; and there is a voice even when the space is empty: The voice, then, is a matrix of sheer sensations, description delivered like Genesis 1 and John 1 are delivered, but there are no presences yet, only water, only the materiality and the movement, or the shape, perhaps, of another in the sequence of pools which plot out my correspondance-abstracted notion of clearing, of Heidegger’s clearing reconceived as a bath, a cleansing, a baptism, an immersion, a floating, a dream, a scrubbing, idroterapia, an embodiment (think of Poggio, and even of Wi Spa, and even of team steam or of the first time I had to use a locker room shower, a truly salutary experience without which there would be some blockage and with which there is some kind of commonhood, not quite to go so far as “brotherhood,” akin perhaps to the one Degas painted for Sparta)--there must be some common point, some shared fixed center around which all else revolves, among all these associations of baths and pools: That is, there must be something ever-present across the list I’ve variously assembled (like in Paris, short-term-remembering Bonomi and reaching backward from there) and extended (like when I drove through New Mexico and thought of all the variously subterranean swimming holes) and distilled (in moments of reflection like the one from about a year ago when I had the first real vision of a mountain clearing, a spring, the transalpine somehow as cool water) and opened up (with combinatorializing lists such as the Wikipedia one purporting to catalogue all the different knot-matrices of spa culture); and, once I find it, this something ever-present can become the point of departure and of return for each oscillation, the still space into which the love note enters, the still space into which whatever experience of art may come must ultimately re-dissolve (putting it this way, it sounds much like what the rosary or the kyrie or the gaze at the X did for Fosse; but I want it to do something different, something more in the vein of what I understand Joyce to have done by framing the Wake as an open loop, and as a sleep, and as the obverse of a consciousness etc.: When I materialize the ur-spa-town, that is, I want its real meaning to be the understanding which I have come to, in which love and art are reciprocal and seamlessly interlinking shorthands for semidistinct instantiations of the same Communion that is also my best understanding of God, in which a point-of-view (a human mind) is a prismatic thing only realizable in a fragmentary

piecemeal manner in “microencounters” (these I must every time call by a different and better name), …).
But of what voice am I really capable? I feel just as sure that all of the above is delusion, just as sure now as before I tried to type it. To type something like this is to ignore the way that my notes actually are, I think. It is to ignore the rewriting, the overwriting, the comprehensive re-covering that would be necessary before all my linearizations can be overlain and ordered in this way. So what is the voice in which I can put all this? I’ve said it ought to resemble Genesis 1 and John 1, but somehow out of that observational impersonality there must emerge a speaker who can in some way understandably be given to the ungainly nesting structures of the sentences to which I’m prone, and at the same time understandably be given to my characteristic compulsive self-questioning. What is the voice, then, out of which I can realize all of the above? Can I spin the voice out of the same voice in which I address Bella? More likely, it would be the disquisitionary voice in which I self-reflect on what I say to Bella and try to concoct thinkings of how that vocalized love might somehow conjoin with the (re-Symbolist accounts of) workings of art to save her and me and everyone.
Maybe a better replacement can be found in the lake of voices I’ve turned over in my hands, not Rabelais nor __ but someone from somewhere in there and Sebald is not right either but perhaps I am getting closer inch by inch.

Deep within here is one account of the reason any real work attaining what are my ambitions here needs to be “oscillatory.” From my reading of Beckett’s Proust:

> … [the below] scaffolds my ubiquitous “crystalline” figures (and the alchemy ones, the scent ones, and the tincture ones besides) with pyla that reach deeper into the soul-gouffre than I, it need barely be said, know how to go. “The mood, as usual, has no importance. The point of departure of the Proustian exposition is not the crystalline agglomeration but its kernel--the crystallised. The most trivial experience--he says in effect--is encrusted with elements that logically are not related to it and have consequently been rejected by our intelligence : it is imprisoned in a vase filled with a certain perfume and a certain colour and raised to a certain temperature. These vases are suspended along the height of our years, and, not being accessible to our intelligent memory, are in a sense immune, the purity of their climatic content is guaranteed by forgetfulness, each one is kept at its distance, at its date. So that when the imprisoned microcosm is besieged in the manner described, we are flooded by a new air and a new perfume (new precisely because already experienced), and we breathe the true air of Paradise, of the only Paradise that is not the dream of a madman, the Paradise that has

been lost” (55).

This follows immediately upon the above. “The identification of immediate with past experience, the recurrence of past action or reaction in the present, amounts to a participation between the ideal and the real, imagination and direct apprehension, symbol and substance. Such participation frees the essential reality that is denied to the contemplative as to the active life. What is common to present and past is more essential than either taken separately. Reality, whether approached imaginatively or empirically, remains a surface, hermetic. Imagination, applied--a priori--to what is absent, is exercised in vacuo and cannot tolerate the limits of the real. Nor is any direct and purely experimental contact possible between subject and object, because they are automatically separated by the subject's consciousness of perception, and the object loses its purity and becomes a mere intellectual pretext or motive. But, thanks to this reduplication, the experience is at once imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual, ideal without being merely abstract, the ideal real, the essential, the extratemporal. But if this mystical experience communicates an extratemporal essence, it follows that the communicant is for the moment an extratemporal being. Consequently the Proustian solution consists, in so far as it has been examined, in the negation of Time and Death, the negation of Death because the negation of Time. Death is dead because Time is dead.” (55–56). By the end we have a soteriology in (what is technically) paraphrase (“by other means,” or “by another way” as the magi returned, to restore my optimistic Christian trappings, if you like, here). [I add on 30 May 2025: I don’t know how this tracing checks out with the relevant section (near the end) of Being and Time, but what Beckett is really extracting here is an ekstasis within the music of time itself, that music which is not captured in the conventional experience of time that we (as subjects) have built up; and that ekstasis is all the “saving” that we were promised, maybe, and somehow it is enough, and paradise is present precisely as a scansion of the world, within every stitch in its fabric, we’re just always skipping right over it, but then what is it like to pop through into it, is it only a slipping glimpse? I don’t think so.]

Argument: “Summa,” “Contra,” etc.

[8 November 2024]

But, yes, I’d like to do all that alright. Even if I have no voice but my own (this question is a question of craft, and since my view on craft is that a real painter swears himself to the length of any diligence, there will be a tool, a solution, because I will find one, because I am sworn to look as hard as is necessary).

And it can go under a subtitle like An argument or indeed something of the form Summa contra __, because after all it is not a work of writerly art but rather a finely-crafted device that, I hope, might, if I craft it finely enough, create a space into which a

reading mind can enter and change and become again possible for art (as Eliot would say), a space into which a reading mind can enter and change and thence proceed toward paintings and be receptive to art in such a way that art can realize its transfigurative potential (if I scrape against soteriological language here, it is precisely because I know no avowable way to think of art besides as the realization of the redemptive love of God, the materialization of the Holy Spirit, σημεῖᾰ tout précisément).

Contra what? Contra the null hypothesis that capital has effectively choked out all art, that if any aesthetic beauty remains in the world it is not significant in any tabulation or account of the resistance to the pernicious effects of broken capitalism, Control, technocratic fascism, etc. Whether or not this null is widely held, it's resonant with countless appraisals of the day, not all of them aesthetically nihilistic, some more incisive than others, some more optimistic than others; the first to come to mind happens to be Sean Tatol's.∗

Not an experimental novel, then, but an essay, An Argument, an interested and committed work of nonfiction, couched in figurative language that is meant to make the argument more alive, to give it hooks and claws and teeth, because anyone who'd say this form obscures the core thrust contained within would do well, as a first step toward getting on board, to find a way to read clearly.

[∗ "I guess my thoughts always revolve around why today's art appears so incapable of producing anything new or good, but at the moment I've been trying to parse out something more specific. It's relatively clear why contemporary painting can't match up to its history: the burden of the past is stifling, painters are free to borrow from any tradition but those traditions are kept at arm's length by being borrowed, there's no connoisseurship to distinguish a good painting from a bad one and the bad one is probably easier to sell, etc. Painting is a discipline intrinsically tied to its past, which is to say it's an expression of a received culture, and since our own culture is dismal and confused it makes sense that painters are trapped in a mire. It's less clear why other modes that are less burdened by history like photography, film, installation art, or anything else, aren't faring any better. I don't care about medium-specificity; my concern is with 20th century art that was good by the force of its obviousness and effortlessness, and why even those avenues seems closed to us. To put it another way, the burden of what has been done makes sense, but the reason we can't still invent the undone is less clear." "Decadence and Poverty: More Art Problems," 16 October 2024.]"

Doubling the "I"

Maybe everything in the "I" needs to be split in two: Either it is Ludovic speaking in blunt narration of the thoughts of Nemo, or Nemo

speaking thus of the acts of Ludovic. (In the finally striking unity, Ludovic Nemo, which is not to be a triumphant final synthesis but rather properly a Correspondance-abstraction: a wrought shade, real, but of a new order never fully assimilable to the priors. And its identity, “Ludovic Nemo,” is to be a specific one, including but not limited to that which it already bears: That painter, Bernard, in the moment at the eye of the vortex whose sweeping arms include Manet and the Impressionists and Cézanne and the “Post-Impressionists” and van Gogh and Gauguin and Cubism (Paris as “city of Cubism” is also “city of this all” but see it, first, in the city where Modigliani’s nudes hang on walls of rooms, the city whose cafés showed the first scenes Cubistically rendered) (Cubism being not just Picasso and Braque and Gris but also Gertrude Stein and everything herfrom) and the tangential offshoot Catholic recuperation in which Bernard himself would go on to prefigure Mathieu in some strange way and Hantaï in some other strange way and myself in some new and ever stranger way (myself in what way? Catholic in precisely that manner shared by Mallarmé, and Joyce, and Warhol, and Nancy, but also Mathieu and Hantaï, Baudelaire and Bernard). Although I don’t want to beat anything over the head with all this. It has to emerge subtly, so subtly, even only in glimpses; I write this firstly just to say that this is in my head, and, as with everything in my head, I need to write it down so that it does not have to become my book or my painting.)

If the “I” is thus doubled, it rises to mind whether there is some matter of opposites whose synthesis would replace each and preserve both, in the manner of a Hegelian dialectic. The best solution to this possibility, I think, is thus. Since I cannot, and for that matter do not want to, single out two “persons” within myself of which a synthesis would be interesting and worthy of playing-out as a work of literature, I want rather to negate the reading of the voices’ doubling as a dialectic. I want, that is, to make the two component-I voices indistinguishable, allotting sections to the mouth of each without systematic rules, letting the discrete and specific character of each arise purely by happenstance, and to thus achieve a doubling sheerly for doubling’s own sake. (Asle and Asle, for example, in Septology, are easily distinguished by having and not having, respectively, succumbed to alcoholism. There is to be no such handy key distinguishing Ludovic from Nemo, nor, for that matter, distinguishing each from Ludovic Nemo.)

The name of Klossowski already (at the time of the making of this note) appears eleven times in this document, but, with the possible exception of notes I’ve made elsewhere and did not see through to pasting in here, it seems I have not yet noted one of the dimensions of his work which is most crucial to me.

I am speaking of the arc of the doubling of the self (alternatively, the doubling of the point-of-view; the inadequacy of terms like this is, of course, the central occupation of Klossowski's lifelong engagements), which is perhaps the central longitudinal arc of Le souffleur. The only way to really say what I mean is to quickly read through that whole book, with an eye to the kinesis--not smooth, involving a flickering as well as continuous parallaxes--of the relation of K. and Theodore Lacase; but a good effort at an approximation can be found in the resumé of the book given on pp. 35ff. of Les Doublures: manuscrits du Souffleur et autres documents (https://archive.org/details/pierre-klossowski-doublures-ismael).

If one good reason for trying to paint everything I will paint through the sieve or crible of an "autobiography of Ludovic Nemo" can be put most vaguely in terms of my interest in sustaining the life of all the animating forces which lay behind the recent wave of interest in the literary form grouped famously inadequately under the label "autofiction," my vaguely avowed but really real interest in the real & not-exhausted tensions which were activated by the remarkably disparate works known thereby,
then,
perhaps a second good reason can be read into the fact that Huysmans's des Esseintes was only able to come to life, as it were, i.e. to be what he was for Mallarmé, for Wilde, for everyone on down to Michael Krebber, because of the form Huysmans gave to his content; which is to speak with absurdly inadequate terms, so allow me to rephrase:

In giving us des Esseintes, Huysmans performed a technique akin to that which lies near the heart of cartoons' appeal according to this reviewer of Cosima von Bonin's exhibition Songs for Gay Dogs in Flash Art which I listened to last night while driving back from Daphne's apartment where I met her and Bella for Spanish wine in a stolen or gifted (I don't know because there's one of each) Lipp glass, stout pie, and peppermint bark on the way home from plankmaking in the dark after work: "These cartoon icons were designed to be emotionally expressive, and their global ubiquity gives viewers an immediate point of access. Von Bonin uses these characters (and many more) as blank canvases for feeling: it's easier to relate to pain and strife when it's projected onto a Looney Tunes character instead of an actual person. In Open Your Shirt Please (2019), Daffy Duck – famous for his on-screen neurosis and egotism – battles encroaching negative space that threatens to consume him across five velvet-covered panels. He eventually loses the fight to the shadows, resulting in a single all-black rectangle. As Clara Drechsler writes in her essay 'Demon Clearing Service' for the exhibition's catalogue, 'There's no one who would rather be Daffy than Cosima. Sadly, the requisite qualities are not sufficiently pronounced in her. But perhaps they do share the same

demons.’”

As an aside I note that what I have had in my head as my reason for studying after Ren and Stimpy has much more to do with formalism, with the (implied, but for that no less real) movement of bodies through planes, than with parasocial empathy, or identification, or projection, or whatever concoction thereof is at issue for this reviewer and possibly for von Bonin. But perhaps none of these dimensions can ever have been fully absent.

On Proust’s “Esquisse pour les deux côtés,”
in my folio classique edition 591ff.

From the short introduction, first, a phrase which makes me think directly of my two voices, Ludovic and Nemo, whether or not I end up giving them the voices “I” and “he” (and so for the latter putting into the third person, in a direct transposition, half the mass of things I will say) or find some other way to consummate the doubling which I’ve been thinking I need: Theirs will be one of the “major symmetries” of my work, and the value of this phrase is the view of the work-object that it entails. “L’opposition du côté de chez Swann et du côté de Guermantes constitue l’une des symétries majeures de la Recherche” (591).

The introduction also provides another striking turn of phrase: “la réminiscence [provoquée par le heurt d’une fourchette sur une assiette, etc.] donne lieu à un exposé en forme de l’esthétique proustienne” (592). Perhaps this “Proustian aesthetic” is the kernel which the following enshrines.

I pause to import words from Walter Benjamin that came before me on 20 December 2024.
These words I have emphatically taken for granted; how? Via Prof. Landy, in some way I took to heart without preserving a citational tag? In any case, I accept them newly on Benjamin’s (not absolute) authority: “What Baudelaire meant by correspondances can be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form. [Crisis-proof: Hence the insistence on reality, explicability, demonstrability; or, perhaps, the component of Symbolist aesthetics that Annick Ettlin outsources to “pragmatism.”] This is possible only within the realm of ritual [hold on:]. If it transcends this realm, it presents itself as the beautiful. In the beautiful, ritual value appears as the value of art. [So we end up with ritual value--e.g., the axiomatic adoption of a framework such as la peinture (looking with a history-cultivated body-eye at a flat surface covered with pastes and hung on a wall)--indispensable to beauty. At a glance, this resembles conservatism, or resembles a window through which conservative attitudes can climb; but this is a mere pseudomorphism, because it is really, here, a matter of règles du jeu, whether those rules be the framework of the Mass or the systems which would become the substrate, the playing field, of Jasper Johns]” (“On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in The Writer of Modern Life (Harvard 2006) 198).

That was, mostly, a detour. The main import from Benjamin is this one: He quotes Proust, what he calls a “confessional motto for Proust’s work.” “In Baudelaire ... these reminiscences are even more numerous. It is obvious they do not occur by chance, and this, to my mind, is what gives them crucial importance. No one else pursues the interconnected correspondances with such leisurely care, fastidiously yet nonchalantly—in a woman's scent, for instance, in the fragrance of her hair or her breasts—correspondances which then inspire him with lines like ‘the azure of the vast, vaulted sky’ or ‘a harbor full of flames and masts’” (qtd. 199).

I pay particular attention to “No one else pursues the interconnected correspondances with such leisurely care, fastidiously yet nonchalantly—in a woman's scent, for instance, in the fragrance of her hair or her breasts”; here he enshrines an posture, obviously intrinsic to--but not completely reducible to--that of the flâneur.

I link one more Benjamin line, adding exercises to this posture. He speaks of Proust’s “lifelong exercises in which he strove to bring to light past things saturated with all the reminiscences that had penetrated his pores during the sojourn of those things in his unconscious” (196).

These exercises, and this posture, are what I find in the esquisse I was just looking at.*

I assemble all this just to say that my own aesthetic practice has long since assumed this very same form. (Whether or not this was programmatic, as it apparently first wasn’t and then later was, for Proust; and also, I’ve developed a sort of facility with this that I could even aspire to think of as a craft)--of course, all along with the pursuit and working of “adorning so” (Cavalcanti) the canzone, the painting, the epistolary prism, adornments which may take the form of maintaining structures from among which one could speak of “one of the major symmetries” of the work.)

[* For example: “C'est de ces promenades solitaires que je fis à l'automne du côté de Meséglise que date une des lois vraiment immuables de ma vie spirituelle. Tout d'un coup tandis qu'une image passait sous mes yeux ou dans ma pensée, je sentais à un plaisir particulier, à une sorte de profondeur, qu'il y avait quelque chose sous elle, une réalité plus profonde. Je ne savais quoi. Je gardais précieusement l'image dans ma pensée, je marchais avec précaution comme de peur de la faire envoler. Quelquefois je me persuadais que ce n'était qu'à la maison devant mon papier que je pourrais l'ouvrir avec sécurité, et trouver son contenu intellectuel. C'était un clocher que j'avais vu filer dans le lointain, une fleur de sauge, une tête de jeune fille. Je sentais que là-dessous il y avait une impression, et je revenais à la maison rapportant mon impression vivante cachée sous cette image qui la signifiait comme on rapporte sous l'herbe qui la garde fraîche une carpe qu'on a pêchée. Arrivé à la maison j'ouvrais mon panier, je tâchais de soulever l'herbe et de saisir le poisson s'il ne s'était pas échappé en route. Jamais ce n'est la grandeur, la valeur rationnelle d'une idée qui m'a depuis donné la sensation de sa beauté, qui m'a dit: voilà, il y a du beau, du vrai là-dessous, il y a

quelque chose à creuser. C'est quelque image qui était a priori sans valeur intellectuelle quelque clocher filant dans une perspective, quelque fleur de sauge, quelque tête de jeune fille, quelque forme qui s'imposait à moi" (592–593). I cannot help but wonder whether the physical action, the practice, the craft, which the artist performs in this capacity has something in common with the activity of the patient of Freudian (Lacanian too?) analysis. One finds something in the flux of sensation (which flux is the confluence of the sometimes-apparently (but only apparently) mirror-still waters of memory and the sometimes-unbearably-turbulent currents of present experience), and one preserves it, splays it in words (in paint if one could! Maybe someday; now, my paint doesn't go an inch to faithfully deposit the distillate (insight? memory?) while my words can go far enough to make me feel, often though not always, complete). The words I copied above from the esquisse just name what is meant by the côté de Guermantes. That of Combray is, so briefly, the mémoire involontaire epiphany, represented this time not by the madeleine in the teacup but by the clinking of knife against picnic plate which superposes the present moment with a past one; the past one is one of surpassing spleen, but in this superposition it becomes the substrate of a new moment of profound worth--which, incidentally, commands the artist immediately into a monkish summons to his pen and paper, to record (594–595). I ask, not urgently, what use there is in the specificity of this dutiful reporting to transcription, if not just to establish, on a theoretical plane, the sheer fact that such a moment of transport is possible to persons.]

Voice, interest, legibility

I feel I might not have done enough to assure avoidance of complete obscurity, impenetrability, inexplicable essayism, etc.

Urge to supply some kind of Kafka-Krohn-Bertram intrigue and tension, inexorable and unnameable pull, in place, perhaps, of the familiar set-piece plot that the roman policier suppled Melville's Samouraï or that variations on the romance arc seem to provide many novels from the last 50 years. (This function has, in the past, been satisfactorily fulfilled by a reminiscent invalid (La recherche); a reminiscent writer shut in a somewhat absurd room and sending letters (Murnane, Inland); and a reminiscent perambulatory painter moving from an exterior-feeling compulsion on the shores of fjords and in the snowy streets of a city (Septology). My reminiscent sleeps and wakes and dreams (perhaps) a clearing; but what I intend to interpellate among this routine of his, again and again, is too various to cohere, lacks the familiar shape and sites of a childhood that Proust and Murnane and Fosse all supply. So I need to impose some other structure. But what is it? Maybe it is the painting of the painting I just painted, which could appear on the cover or not at all or in replacement (I don't like this option) or, maybe best of all, only in intricate description, on the far side of all the leadup I encoded in what I called "Lover," and interspliced among the love letters which

establish the rapport (give a texture; some texture, not enough; I need to supply more detail: Supply the fact that it is painted in the lover's absence, supply the dust and the cold and the neglect of the (my, not Rivette's Frenhofer's) abandoned studio, supply my working-through of all the steps without which I could not begin painting (as did Frenhofer, at nearly unbearable length), supply my memory, just after duskfall, before turning on the room's lights, of taking the panel up to my eyes like a cup, like before I've lifted hips like a cup, lifted mandible like a cup, the coming together of lips to lips, being flooded with all that's been made of the uncanny likeness of the texture of dried skeins of oilpant to that of human skin, peau, sensible, sensitive, the ambiguous transpiration of contact of lips (and therewith passage/traversal of orifice threshold) to leaden paint, fragrant, oil of linseed, huile d'amande, cooler on the lips than plywood, now warmer, war like water that something lives in, now unbearably hot, but healing, searing as though from the charcoals of the censer (hearth?) at the hands of seraphim (cherubim?). Do not supply the fact of the photograph, only the actual acts of brush and eyes; make it so that what was really a photograph is in Nemo's mind, imagination, perhaps) of painter and lover.)

Or, the thought that the intrigue, the tension, this pull, could come from orbiting around a central figure of an infant, an unknowable mind, an other person itself, of which one's lover is, among all other things, perhaps first of all, a shadow. (So, yes, I think that the recurrence of the infant in center-field closeup can be superposed together with the intent pursuit of the painting.)

Baby vision and all it was to be.

Ludovic's or Nemo's daughter? I don't think so. Just an infant, but not just a child, either, that has just happened into his life, like in McCarthy's The Road.

I believe that I can write this infant because of the thoughts and feelings that Fennec taught me to think and feel.

Guignol, Lacan; Ubu, Pantagruel

Reassertion of my interest in Rabelais's Pantagruel and guignol theater (mediated/distilled by a Mathis-Collins-type lens especially).

(The pairing is doubly twined: Recall that Collins's 15 Orient exhibition elicited the adjective "Rabelasian" [sic.] from Sean Tatol; and also, Alfred Jarry enshrines their pairing in his Ubu Roi: that play is considered a descendent of Gargantua and Pantagruel's comic grotesquerie, and Jarry stated that his intention for the play was to "write a guignol." These seem to be the two main sources of Ubu's DNA, aside from the composite of Shakespeare's tragedies which supply the plot, and the Sophoclean titles.)

Ubu also makes glow again the net of figures I can't seem to put down: puppets (special to Rilke); commedia dell'arte (made alive by Picasso's rose paintings, which, incidentally, were also special to

Rilke); and Le pitre châtié, which is perhaps the ur-site of what I am about to point to in the next paragraph.

In particular, I want my culling of plot devices, character types, problemata, and textures to be lifted from Rabelais and guignol but through the distilling/rarefaction lens of these two essays: “Alas, Poor Yorick! … The Being of Spirit is a Bone” by Nathan Brown and “The Master Is Undead” by Mladen Dolar, both in Problemi International no. 6.* They impose a Lacanian angle, a fixation on certain concepts, problemata, registers of abstraction, that I want to mark & color everything I cull from these sources. I feel, among other things, that this will put me in direct contact with the Hantaï of that Warnock essay on the Femelles miroirs and those Meuns, and with the café conversation from Agnès Varda about men and women and bulls in Miró, and with the specific Hemingway of The Sun Also Rises, and with the Godard of Prénom: Carmen (with its quartet and its hotel room) and Pierrot le Fou (with the scene in the hideout apartment: its shirt and, most of all, its paintings).

[* I found this journal, I forget how, by way of Alenka Zupančič, in whom I am again interested because of Olivia Kan-Sperling; Kan-Sperling’s Heavy Traffic story had such an excellent style and execution that I felt breathtaken; I went back to her Lacanian (Zupančič-Žižek) piece that spiraled outward from that very striking Abercrombie publication, and intend to embark therefrom on a full pass of Zupančič’s What Is Sex?, whose energy and force I hope to maintain in paintings that are more sustainable than the new one I’ve just made, paintings which, perhaps, extend the Francis Bacon that made Bertolucci** make Last Tango in Paris (which may be the same Bacon that made Deleuze write Logique de sens); I’ve recently learned from the painter Kira Scerbin how Bacon can be extended--not that I want to extend him in the same way that she does, but that I want to have the same area of contact with his work that she has, and extend from him there in my own direction.]

[** I cannot help but add the perhaps paranoid (in the sense of hallucinatory) doubling of an extant link: in the standard account, what Bertolucci took from Pasolini was the sheer texture that is directly analogous between the Pasolini film he worked on (Accattone?) and the first film he (Bertolucci) made thereafter--the fact that these two films obviously acted in exactly the same world, etc. But I have something else. Of all that Pasolini has done to me, nothing was so devastating (I recall Kissick: art “should bring us to our knees” and “destroy reality”) as the bowling-ball-to-gut, dissolving-of-brain experience of watching Salò. Perhaps the greatness of Bertolucci’s and Brando’s and Schneider’s Last Tango is that it was in touch with precisely the same truth: that sex is, before anything else, the horizon of the person, the beyond of selfhood, the destroying of identity. And this truth seems to be the one which defines Zupančič’s specific position, the one which she uniquely records in What is Sex?.]

As a superfluous appendix: I paste the abstracts of those two Problemi International papers.

Brown:
“This paper addresses the relation between famous phrases in Shakespeare and Hegel—“Alas, Poor Yorick!” and “The being of spirit as a bone”—
which punctuate reflections upon the materiality of spirit. Meditating upon the challenge these enunciations pose to the living thought of dead
matter, the author takes Hegel’s infinite judgment as an incitement to consider the problem of existence in Hamlet at the level of the material occupation of space. From this perspective, the article argues that
Hamlet is pervasively concerned with the metaphysical riddles, political
implications, and meta-theatrical effects of spirit’s spatial existence—not
only in the graveyard scene or in the play’s famous philosophical soliloquys, but also in its subplots and apparently minor episodes. Property,
warfare, station, the relation between nature and artifice, the material
supports of writing and desire are inscribed in spatial economies of displacement, exchange, and dissolution that persistently accompany and conjoin the play’s intimate psychological dramas and overarching political framework. Ultimately, this is a matter of what it means for bodies to be displayed on a stage.”

Dolar:
“The paper takes as its starting point the anecdote of Freud’s visit to Slovenia in April 1898, when he by coincidence met dr. Karl Lueger, the burgomaster of Vienna and the notorious antisemitic populist leader
whom none other than Hitler later took as the role model. Lueger represented at the time a new type of the figure of the master, after the
demise of the traditional paternal figures which served as the models of
authority. The anecdote can be taken as emblematic of the political role
of psychoanalysis which at its inception had to confront a new type of authority and a logic which stretches from that time up to the present.
The paper further considers two cases of new grotesque masters after the political shift of modernity, Marx’s confrontation with Louis Bonaparte in The Eighteenth Brumaire, and the fictional figure of Ubu proposed by Alfred Jarry (roughly at the time of Freud’s anecdotical encounter of Lueger) and which Michel Foucault took as the paradigm of “grotesque sovereignty.” The second part of the paper tries to figure out how the seemingly excessive figures of new populist masters fit into the structure of what Lacan described as the discourse of the university, which presented for him the discourse that subtends the

social ties after the advent of modernity. The populist masters can be taken as the symptoms of that constellation, following Lacan’s gloomy predictions of the rise of segregation on the basis of university discourse, with the advancement of science, the common markets and the spread of universalization.”

Diagram

[The actual original text that spills off to the right is contained in this document, but an updated version exists under “baths” subheading below.]
The thought is that each night--the space spanning the endpoints of each horizontal line in this diagram--could be a dissolution of self, and the centerpoint of each horizontal line would be a concentration of self into an utterance, a finely-wrought multifariously-determined work (which, in turn, becomes prismatic, but which, in its own becoming-into-being, is the momentary concentration of as much as possible of the kaleidoscopic out-refractions of the prismatic self).

The space around the endpoints is the sleep; the loss of self in these cases is the state of falling asleep (more or less literally--perhaps it ought to be rather literal at first) in water, which is also sacramental (it is, in every case, baptism; a Catholic sacrament is the deepest possible gesture (I say “gesture” because it is a movement of the person, the body-mind, only visible in the body and yet involving all of the body and therefore also all of the mind because, while not reducible to the body, the mind is nowhere disconnected from the body)).

The centerpoints of the lines, the concentrations into “an utterance,” are not just the letters but also works of art in any medium, as long as they are in some medium (meaning: legible). So, for example, a painting can attain to the same “utterance” status as one of the letters; as can a little gemlike set-piece like the Samouraï example here (that’s what is clipped in the blue; which I describe thus: “On this day, the letter arrives as a prop in a Neo-noir sequence whose postures, events, facial expressions, shot-framings, will all be lifted from that Delon-Melville in a manner which I now realize is similar to what Kan-Sperling did for Heavy Traffic. Nevertheless: At a certain point Delon will scrawl a note; it won't be clear at first what he's written, but it will turn out that it was the latest in the series of Ludovic Nemo's notes.”).

These are the only moments (and all the moments) when the self is interpretable as unified, harmonic, & total. So, really, one could better picture each horizontal line as a braid of sorts, of two-ish strands; the distinguishable strands are the perceptibly-disconnected separable constituent components of the self (all the disconnects prove them), here represented by the duality (plurality) of Ludovic

and Nemo; they converge (fully and precisely) only at the very center, where they become one, Ludovic Nemo (the name of the “author” or “artist” par excellence--the only sort of “construction” of “unified self” I can avow. Meanwhile I always avow the notion of “person” as that toward which the only possible posture is adoration; thus “person” must necessarily be kept excruciatingly open as a concept, extremely generous in the plotting of its bounds. I’m a person even when I am asleep, even when I am incoherent, even when I despair, even when I am abjected, Controlled, etc., whereas in all of these cases I am not capable of real self-gathering utterances (capable of uttering prismatic art-objects)).

Perhaps the best way to write the edge-of-line sleep-in-water portions is to write them in Fosse’s soporific dream sentences, basic, long, spare, perhaps redoubling in doubt, open to a dream logic, but exuding simplicity, as though the barest simplest possible transcription of material-tending phenomenon of the immersion in question (making my point-of-view as close as I can get it to “objective,” reduced as close to mindless body as possible). Here is how, in these moments, the Fosse oneiric-voice allows the “braid” to fray into Ludovic, and Nemo, and (therefrom) into an uncountable haze of different “I”: This dream plane is where everything I think of as “my memories” exists “at once,” “side by side,” with a connector-logic (nebeneinander), not a sequence-logic (nacheinander). So I can freely float, while narrating in these parts, from one immersion-site (one bath, one spa-town, one baptism, one ocean) to any other, and call “myself” (whenever “I” must be called) at each moment variously “Ludovic” or “Nemo” or “Ludovic or Nemo” or even “Tom” or “Thomas” or “twin” or “Paul” or “doubter” or “lover” or any of the other masks (puppets, fards) I’ve ever sparked.

Meanwhile the things I can avow as “letters”--the paintings or stories or whatever utterances convene a harmonic, unified “Ludovic Nemo”--ought to be as multiply-determined, as positively Nabokov-Mallarmé-encrusted with as many transposed intricacies, as many superposed planes of action and registers of significance as possible (because this is precisely where the Eucharist-boulanger dynamic of all-affects-all is most acutely in effect: this, that is, is the aesthetic site). And if I need pictures of who does this: It’s that body of Ludovic Nemo who holds the paints, who stands before the panel; it’s a boxer (I choose this figure among the several athlete-figures who mean much to me; maybe I’d choose the swimmer, but then I’d really be crossing my wires) whose body’s-and-point-of-view’s entire history was always just a handful of intersecting lines of action and trains of thought whose every specificity (every decision--it would be fun to enumerate them, but I’d need a stand-in to source the textures of the homes and the meals and the training sessions and the childhoods and the relationships and the ideologies and the visions and the desires and the fixations and all the breathing and the becoming-calm and the final becoming-ready) was keyed exclusively to this moment, to put the body-and-point-of-view into the state of perfection-upon-entering-the-ring, to win.

(Problemata emerge, loose ends which do not, I think, necessitate a rewriting of the schema above. There is the obvious unattainability of harmonically unified “Ludovic Nemo” author status for every moment at which my general “I” would really have to take up paints, and work.* But maybe the usefulness of the showing of the true motion (the “music,” the putting into motion of these difficult-to-even-image things, as in Sein und Zeit pt. 2) of how real persons make real beauty and thereby really make life livable, showing that motion truly in an oscillatory work like this, outweighs the possible misconstrual that I’m theorizing something impossible here (i.e. the misconstrual that the painter or the boxer is some superman that I’m either perversely arrogant to aspire to, or ironically depicting). [* For another strange, but important, example to illustrate this tension: One’s most unified, most concentrated, most central all-in-one moment of selfhood is the act of love; but this is also, famously, the moment of the complete loss of self, the complete dissolving of self into--into what? Into ecstasy? Into the abstract “You” of agapic Love? There are choice others who have put this into words worth retaining])

Letters (constituted selves of Ludovic Nemo)

Perhaps this is a good list for the “letters” column (the central column, the avatars for “Ludovic Nemo,” for authorship, for concentration of being into singular (in the sense of consummately specific) acts of inscription-into-materiality):
[0.: The existing Proscenium, Ludovic Nemo penning a letter, seated with his back to the armoire?]
1. The painter, as I paint, now, with this Klimt-blumengarten hanging on my wall (as it has for the whole duration in which I came to understand it in this way) (I think I ought to reserve a consideration that the painter-figure should maybe not be among this list-of-twenty at all) (Leaning toward not having this be part of the twenty or at least not here, but, if I do depict this painter’s process, I want to do so by way of all the notes I was making for myself about the Mandorlas and the Bonnard-hand drawings, all those protocols and Mondrian and even the thoughts on Mark Grotjahn: All the plans, directives, and premonitions, the aspirations and foresights and the scaffolding.) And if I dare speak into form this avatar mine, dare I also impute to him traits of body I hold tenderly in the mind: Anything I assembled in images with long coats, scarves, postures? Or the bird-shouldered image from that Krohn story: “People often mistook his difference for a superior intellect and would clap him on the back, only to quickly recoil, feeling how sharp and thin he was under his sweater. / My boyfriend's face was carved with the sangfroid of a street vendor slicing peppers with a penknife, letting the pieces drop and fry in the dirty hot oil. My boyfriend struggled to open jars and pick up credit cards from the floor.” Or again the bird-shouldered

image from one of Joyce's pennyeach pomes, "On the Beach at Fontana": "From whining wind and colder / Grey sea I wrap him warm / And touch his trembling fineboned shoulder / And boyish arm." (The next (the last) stanza of the same implicates too another defining trait of mine, my everpresent almost-overwhelming sense of fear: "Around us fear, descending / Darkness of fear above / And in my heart how deep unending / Ache of love!" I can't help adding more, from another work in the same volume, "Tutto è Sciolto": Again fear grips the "I" and it is, again, me, in certain alternatives ("universes") my conduct with Bella went this way: "The clear young eyes' soft look, the candid brow, / The fragrant hair, / Falling as through the silence falleth now / Dusk of the air. [A simile of falling, in a way alike to the one of descending in "Fontana"; I'd do well to supplement all my images of "mist," which "pervades," with similes like these two (too).] // Why then, remembering those shy / Sweet lures, repine / When the dear love she yielded with a sigh / Was all but thine?" And even more. "Simples" for its epigram and the intensity contained in this prayer: "Be mine, I pray, a waxen ear / To shield me from her childish croon / And mine a shielded heart for her / Who gathers simples of the moon." (This is the one he opened with an epigram "O bella bionda, / Sei come l'onda!") And, lastly, "She Weeps over Rahoon" for its "Danny Boy" grief, the most beautiful kind (posture) I've always held as the only way I know to think of grief: "Rain on Rahoon falls softly, softly falling, / Where my dark lover lies. / Sad is his voice that calls me, sadly calling, / At grey moonrise. // Love, hear thou / How soft, how sad his voice is ever calling, / Ever unanswered and the dark rain falling, / Then as now. // Dark too our hearts, O love, shall lie and cold / As his sad heart has lain / Under the moongrey nettles, the black mould / And muttering rain." (This last nature morte, the moongrey nettles and the black mould and the muttering rain (all over sad dark heart): They remind me, in texture, of Saoirse Bertram.
2. The boxer (Should he, and all of these, be named "Ludovic Nemo" too? Maybe when he finally does enter the wring, that is when he writes the second letter, and after the letter it is a matter of lifting the belt (should this be a moment of comic exaggeration?), retreating to dissolution in some bath or other. Or: Have this come maybe fourth in the order, after three-ish that are technically ambiguous but seem like they invite interpretation as unambiguous aesthetic triumphs (a painter liking his own work, a poet liking his own painting), such that when there is a jump-cut through the boxing match itself, the reader expects the belt to be lifted; but what is found instead is the smelling salts, a trainer's padded table, icemaker in the corner, a locker room or wherever the loser-by-knockout goes to be revived. The boxer can get enfleshing material from Belmondo (he was a boxer; I can use what I've written about muscularity as well as what's been written about him in obituaries blogs and even Cahiers) as well as, maybe, that Irish John Wayne movie. Here's another thing that can happen in passing: R. Home, a man of law. Every boxer needs a loyal lawyer, lest he end up in Ireland like John Wayne. The lawyer R. Home is as loyal as they come, owing to

Ludovic a debt of life; (Make it so that Ludovic had stepped in to save R. Home on a dark night on a hard sidewalk in front of a loud bar on the naval base side of San Diego, Ludovic visiting R. Home while on some form of leave; Ludovic was able to intervene soon enough to preserve R. Home's life, but not his sight, arriving between the combatants before the coup de grace but after an impact between the rear of R. Home's skull and the aforementioned sidewalk; for the altercation R. Home was later determined to be solely responsible, and, as the common consequence of his culpability and the new development of his physical unwholeness, R. Home was not permitted to stay in the service and found himself in the legal profession.) (What he says to him is something from Homer, some kernel I glean about the eternal ritual & aesthetic dimension of what I'm here calling boxing; in particular, it's about the match between Ajax and Odysseus by the ships; Ludovic Nemo is to be cast as Ajax, premonition of defeat but also prompting for his striking of certain postures I find in Exekias, which I elaborated in my second piece of writing for Prof. Maxmin.)
3. Rilke, maybe, the image of him writing his elegies or sonnets, that outpouring of creativity; I don't want to stage it in that Thurn-und-Taxis Gothic setting, but still, I think, Rilke's own evocations of his conditions of writing would probably be good to appropriate. Maybe he warms up with drafts that are real Rilke fragments, but when he finally sets his finally-luminous pen to the paper, what comes out is the third letter. And I think he is still named Ludovic Nemo, and he is still writing to Belle. Here is how I will pull off an embodiment (really an impersonation, as with a puppet) of Rilke. First, I will (having brought the "linearized spa town" fully up to date) rationalize (je vais raisonner) the whole "Rilke" line: I will go through everything I've ever cached away pertaining to Rilke, and I will put it all in line, rearranging to group like with like, so that I have a clear picture of all of what of him I am in this passage to make present.* And then, here is how I will do so: First I will read Gass's work on him all the way through, and then if I need yet more of his voice I will turn to his letters and/or (if I want to try to adopt his prose voice at all) to Malte. [* Among which, no doubt, must be this line from Hartman, which richly and gorgeously overcodes all the sleep which is to happen in this oscillation: "What is the meaning of this sleep that must precede and follow such apperception? It is a readiness of the body and a suspense of the will enabling total reception from the senses. If the poet has been entirely receptive of the event, he may experience its unconscious or involuntary maturing, until the girl appears once more, this time fulfilled. " (87 – 88).]
4. Perhaps this is the right sequencing: Now comes the Delon-Melville moment, the neo-noir predicament, clearly formulaic, clearly imaginative, clearly a proxy, making clear the mythic character of the plane where all twenty of these letter-writings converge (where all twenty really make sense together, i.e. they only really all belong together on this imaginative plane).
5. Rabelais. How many figures for authorship are there? Perhaps I really need to assemble them all and to name each, in turn, Ludovic

Nemo. Each time, bringing up just what from the notion of each means so much to me, what it is that comes back to me when again and again each of these comes back to me. And will it grow tiresome that each, at the climactic moment, just pens another of my (banal, but do they come off that way? Do they come off adequately or serviceably in any way at all?) letters to “Belle.” Maybe it’s growing tiresome; but maybe, here, I start listing them, knowing that, from this point, they really might not stick, the exercise might begin to feel too tryingly Modernist, like Beckett’s lesser works or like the long chapters in mid-late Ulysses that just drag on. If that’s the case, reconsider this; but, if not: Rabelais. If Rabelais: Then make Mathis Collins, and his very re-Symbolist game of permutation of those personages and verbs and elements and textures at 15 Orient, into the lens through which anything I glean from Rabelais must be projected, just as Nancy’s Visitation will be primarily the lens through which I will present a refracted Pontormo (though in Pontormo’s case I’ll also make present the texture of his dietary and health-wise and habitual and social life, by means of his giornali (sp.?).
6. Hantaï.
7. Cavalcanti.
8. Mallarmé.
9. Reverdy when he coined his definition of “image”: And here, perhaps, the “author” is actually Reverdy-Breton-Schuster-Hantaï.
10. Jasper Johns as ur-re-Symbolist--that is, Jasper Johns as described by Sean Tatol?
11. Just any of the Troubadours?
12. Pound
13. Balthus
14. The Sicilian poet court
15. Any of my paradiso terrestre contemporary painters? Any, or several at once for purposes of disguise?
16. Pontormo with his diet, journal, and work on the eventually-flooded chapel? Or is he at work on the Visitation, and do I use Nancy’s “Visitation” as a projection-lens furnishing much of the necessary wording to show what Pontormo was really up to (and do I take the necessary time, here, to set up the Vasarian “transalpine” intrigue and inaugurate a certain stretch of revisionist painting history here)?
17. If the answer to the last question above is “yes,” then: Grünewald
18. [Insert anyone else I feel is indispensable to a “transalpine” arc if that’s what I think should happen here]
19. Jan van Eyck
20. In no particular order (only some of the above was in any particular order): Nabokov weaving one story into another, and Nabokov making his centaur-work, his “merman,” with its ultimately-convergent but for long rhizomatically-told (i.e. footnote-structured) encrusted crystalline object in literary form;
21. maybe even Saoirse Bertram or Tao Lin, with their respective means of excruciation (Bertram the tearing abstraction, Lin the drugs and ennui and everything from 2013 that in 2018 he was recovering from)

and their respective crystalline instant-condensations of either cold-air clarity (Bertram) or twinkling beauty (Lin);
22. Bernard himself? Or anyone important (Cézanne, Gauguin, Bernard, Bonnard, Matisse, any of my dear Picassos (the Cubist, the one in Antibes, or the one in the garret painting Boy with pipe), etc. (esp. if I am engaging a revision of history of la Peinture from a "transalpine" angle) from what T.J. Clark called "french painting": "the line from Corot to Matisse, from Sardanapalus to Ma Jolie"? I lean toward "no": I don't really have any specific bone to pick right now in any of these stories of or moments from "Modernism" as such
23. There are countless who I simply haven't named. Pantheonization is tiresome and always seems to run the risk of embarrassment or uselessness or both

Baths

I; Wi Spa
The experience of the ritual moving around, the deep bodily registration of it all which is on the same order as Hantaï's posture-conscious "apprendre aux genoux" and Rilke's acute sensitivity to bodily realities as the ones that all realities have to be registered in/as; also the fact of nudity, which I can make present via cutouts from "Lover" and from the Greek pose entering the shower after Cameron park

II; Rilke's Mountain Gentian
Not sure what exactly needs to fill in here

III; Nostalghia
Tarkovsky's Nostalghia's pool

IV; Kundera
Kundera's Tereza's town's pools, as filmed by Kaufman, say

V; Budapest
Something in Budapest, maybe something Fr. Bernard would have known

VI; Austerlitz's Marienbad
Is there enough there?

VII; Mastroianni's 8 1/2 town
Is there enough?

VIII; Guatemala [?]
The volcanic river eddies in Guatemala (?) that the Cistercian alum told us about and that Sam mentioned

IX; Proust Normandy
M. Legrandin's Balbec? Add Corbière's drawings and paintings?

X; Rayon vert
Rohmer's Le Rayon vert's Biarritz

XI; Cap Ferret
Pines and Cocteau and Nancy's address and the nudist colony I read about (was it near there?)

XII; Le Corbusier
Le Corbusier's cabanon and imagining a walk down to the beach below it (and did he die there?) (And, maybe, imagining building it for myself--not the same plan, just the same structure, the same generating principle)

XIII; Big Sur
Running into the enormously powerful Pfeiffer Beach Pacific (collapse into it my image of that so-distant cliff beach at Na Pali) holding Danny

XIV; Graduation
Drunkenly running into Half Moon Bay with Danny in my arms

XV; Mission Bay Fog
That otherworldly day with the fog on Mission Beach, and going into the ocean until I couldn't see shore and only had sense (sens) from the oriented rhythm of the risings and fallings -- Also how the waves would be breaking for something like a hundred yards; talk about this and the reefs at Cardiff in that deep gray, sky of sharkskin or sealskin. And also, I think, here, is where I should activate a dream of myself as a merman. Merman but also Poseidon and Proteus (that old man on the strand (?) changing shape like a dangerous wheel even as Ludovic Nemo does from day to day; his plurivocality is both his strength and his tragedy, his gift and his determinative curse, his horizon). I paste two things toward this end: first, notes from just a couple days ago; second, a very important scene of a bath from

Ulysses, which may be from either “Lotos-Eaters” or “Proteus” (I can’t remember (It turns out it’s Lotus-Eaters)). The notes: “On the rear cover of my decrepit gold-orange (my color words are pathetically elementary in comparison to their expectation. What I really mean would be “saffron” were it not for the from-within illumined gradation of the breast of the oriole, which makes “oriole” the only right word here) Berkley edition of Pale Fire, Mary McCarthy says “this merman of the deep” (after calling the book a “centaur-work of Nabokov, half poem, half prose”), and the phrase lodges deep, deep. / Encrusted with all the coralline lines--undersea, not maritime--that ornament Shakespeare’s Tempest (perhaps the most Mallarméan out of his plays for its ethereal sumptuosity, despite Mallarmé’s own greater use found for Hamlet), this figure, the merman, hybrid, athletic, regal, piscine (I mean ichthyc), gray or silver beyond the green, desirous in the warm cold blood beneath scales and in the limbs crevassed by salt dust, / Is Ludovic a merman? or is Nemo? Verne makes this latter move almost too easy. / I think of the day on a boat on Mission Bay, when my sex first felt it was itself. I dreamed “Apollo,” I dreamed “Aphrodite,” and I dreamed “Poseidon.” There are cellic sound-strains these chords seesaw against that are deeper and truer than the obvious ludic hubris. [Quite rich illustrations follow.]” The Joyce: “... Always passing, the stream of life, which in the stream of life we trace is dearer thaaan them all. / Enjoy a bath now: clean trough of water, cool enamel, the gentle tepid stream. This is my body. / He foresaw his pale body reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap, softly laved. He saw his trunk and limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward, lemonyellow: his navel, bud of flesh: and saw the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower” (V.563-572, on p. 71 in our Vintage copies).

XVI; Mission Bay two sunsets
That otherworldly day with the two sunsets on Mission Beach (between this and the last, I can tell a pretty good story of how it is that perfect love can first not be there and then be there); maybe blink years forward--just a flash--to the mica on the Fourth of July

XVII; Finland
Finland maybe, the reindeer-populated mushroom-laced wastes beyond Uppsala

XVIII; Japan
The Youtube of that Ryokan: This against certain notions I'd taken from Miyazaki, and, with the tunnel, deepened by thoughts of the Czech silver mine (just the thought I recorded) and Stendhal's Salzburg crystal flower and the rose empyrean that that has to coincide with

(It will be played like this: Someone is going to sleep in that Ryokan, having enjoyed its mats and the magic library-allure array (there's a nice Greek word for this: panoply? Phantasmagoria?) of scents from tags or capsules, and dreams of having walked into that cave under it earlier, and in the dream the memory of that real tunnel becomes first the Czech silver mine made dreamlike by a crab-walking meander through the nebeneinander dream-logic of that painting of it; and then all this is capped off by one last instantaneous deepest image: Stendhal's Salzburg's crystal flower become the Dantean rose empyrean, by the instantaneous metamorphic crystallization of Love.

XIX; Poggio
"As Poggio has remarked": All that. Maybe I can make, in one last gasp, some glorious Pound-scaffolded re-Symbolist vision that lends newly deep substance to this "espresso cup" oscillation

XX; Canterbury Ct
A briefly psychedelic Lancaster-Swimmer thought about Santa Rosa, Balmorea; but really this is just a brief blink as a pretext or a way in to get to the Canterbury Ct pool, bring it back to childhood, infancy even, I become the infant at last; but this is not some Lennon-primal psychedelic conclusion, it's just one more oscillation, one more way of dissolving the self, that endless repetition which is never anymore done once and for all than is your next breath breathed for you by the previous one, which is not, of course, to say that it habit doesn't intervene with a salvific touch as redemptive as Proust's unconscious memory. (The Canterbury Ct pool: Maybe I can make it active by means of the document about that house I assembled in early January; but also, I want to collage into it various memories of Nana's other pool too (the space-age psychedelic pink tube, and everything else I can find), because it's all the same, it's all the site of lostness, pastness, brightness, wholeness, pure happiness)

Accumulating & Staging Materiel

One of the sleepings, maybe the very first one, maybe the very opening of the whole thing:

[Note this is in conflict with my elsewhere stated plan to use basic-

Fosse voice to decompose the “I” into sleep and recompose it therefrom; but I think I like this type of thing better]

Nemo bit the flowerbed. Earth and lilacs in his cottonmouth, Nemo breathes out and breathes in and the huile d’amande or at least a part [shade?] of a mist of it still is there and there is he.

Venus slips out of her furs and hangs a side and three limbs on a hanging indent on a fleuve d’insommellité. [Or: Venus slips out of her furs and is among a fleuve d’insommellité.]

Is there or was there and if there was then there is still or is there still a mist of huile d’amande in through the window when last he asked and he asked Claude Terrasse [was it?] that’s his son in law to add a bit more yellow there because yellow is that of which one never has too much [what’s the quote? Want it formed right even if switched backward].

Venus she hangs on riverrun though the tangent [the forward moment from the incline of certain waves—word for it?] in the groove isn’t quite right as it is on a real oceanic break no it isn’t. Still Venus glides past Eve and Adam’s. And Nemo he’s there and he’s here and he’s there and his father would dream in French so this fleuve sits with him a certain way. Can’t name which just now or he or I might as well rise and void the bladder.

In the sack there are millions in there and up they sit so high & tight up there but not when lying and I am (down). Oh they hang so low sometimes when the water is the hottest that water is and the huile d’amande is in it and the mist is the mist of the hottest water and you positively swim in it. You swim in the mist (you, Nemo, I) swim in the mist and it’s positive yeah it’s never not a good thing when you’re already wet and in it at least once you’re wet.

… (Slowly piece it towards or weave it into the best exegesis of sleeping-to-waking I can)

All my exegeses of sleeping and waking

[A dream-sentence fragment on 12 February 2025: … a cassamander framed on the grass … (there were two lost arms to the sentence)]

From 28 May 2024:

“One of those associative chains which clink around in my mind, binding me with their links (involuntary memory is by no means unidirectionally salvific; it torments too, like a song you hate but can’t get out of your head; when I wake up I am sluggish and if I slowly and with great effort wriggle myself free of the darkness then it is only or at least always primarily to find myself constricted by these very same involuntary links, whether or not they ever be

fruitful, not that the relative fruitfulness or absence thereof in this particular example is to be taken as representative): One of Monika Baer's Mozarts, with his head tucked so round down into his little body; her comment about how long each of these paintings took her, in the context of her account of the waiting, the waiting, maybe the labor of waiting, the very fallow being fertile in her tending of the fields of the mind (these are not her figures of speech). Then the Städelschule (revealing perhaps what set this off: I had been listening this evening to a talk given by Julien Nguyen at Art Center, though in it he never mentioned his schooling), which always (not always) has tailing along it the image of the Städel lion man; the lion man himself, compactly containing his figure with a tight little tucking of the tensile curve that follows straight up his back and then ducks over his spherical head, just like this little Mozart's; but beyond this figure the looser aggregation of figures that go under the sign "lion man," from the childhood way in which I registered the titular image of the Mumford and Sons song, like some Ewok or hairier Ginarrbrik or maybe a lion-faced boy from an early circus, all the way up to something I read this very morning, invoking a cast of half-lion half-man figures filing like some interspersed thread throughout history, possibly for the sake of saying something about de Kooning (particularly his "Judgment Day," maybe) though I cannot now remember where it was."

[There must be more which are not in here, under this heading, yet!]

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3 May 2025

Evening, as the light drained out of the morning; morning, as the glass drained out of the evening; morning, as the light glowed out of the morning; and these and a dozen other emblemata in measured succession, each inert, indifferently repeated but not indifferently varied, a scansion sequentializing the accumulation of faculties and first sensoria.

[This really is what happened when, or as, I awoke today.]

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31 May 2025

This morning the phenomenon of my waking was that of driving over a hill in a car, a hill not San Francisco steep, certainly not Mount Washington steep, nor even Echo Park steep, but rather like that hill on maybe Normandie going down to Koreatown, the one about which I always ask “is this Melrose Hill.” Maybe I had that sensation of the tipping of the point-of-view from up to down, traversing a neutral angle, that sensation registered as a lag or a blur in my first trace of world-consciousness, or maybe the analogy drew upon an abstract commonality not at all physical-spatial but rather having to do with the immaterial passage between the immaterial registers of non-consciousness and consciousness; either way, the slow and smooth tipping into wakefulness seems to have its character tied to that of a night spent in unrecorded dream following upon a strange evening of unusually potent beer-drunkenness: alternating North Coast Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout and Delirium Noël (justified with an invocation of “Swinter,” and noted as really the only beer around with a higher alcohol content by volume than Delirium Tremens, ten percent and change rather than eight percent and change) and only one or two of each but still falling asleep on the couch without realizing it (indeed with no memory of it) in a pile with Bella.

Not so late in the night, in volupté I sunk out of the world. Almost frictionlessly passing by were some instants, and then, with much more inertia and materiality and physical facts to overcome, but still not without calme, we reconvened what had been. A trace of an image, just a spare arrangement of some handful of curves in an extremely specific relation, remains; I wanted to hold it in my memory, I don’t have a Matissean facility with this, but I tried, and here is what of that precision remains (four hours have elapsed, Bella has gone, this is as much as I can remember). The dominant note is, precisely, the “evocation” of Matisse which was unmissable in the Kantarovsky which early last week became one of the paintings most strongly living in me (in the press release for Allergies Eli Diner

wrote “Evocations of disparate predecessors such as Natalia Goncharova, Henri Matisse, James Ensor, Pierre Klossowski and Philip Guston dissolve into references to Soviet Agit-Plakat posters from the period of de-Stalinization”; even upon inspection, I cannot find Gontcharova, though in my search I found the below costume design of Saint Mark for something called Liturgie, which I love, and these “Pillars of salt” that I value for the way in which they make simultaneous the moai of Easter Island and the large carved stump from New Guinea or Vanuatu (I don’t recall) who, I said, “holds his sex”). Do note that I did not look at an image of this painting in at least the twenty-four-hour period preceding the attempt to remember the detail of the curves that is the doubled drawing-pair below. In the three days between, I’ve filled my mind with Matisse, more precisely with the Matisse of Bois’s “The Blinding” (again), but Kantarovsky’s mediation remains.

I said aloud, Thursday morning, the first words from my lips, “piss water,” when I saw the espresso begin to come out of my Gaggia. A name containing weakness (immediately palpable in the way it flowed out of the two spout-holes too readily, and in the grayish too-thin foam that was all that gathered on the surface of the dark liquid lacking in

warmth), and also the unwholesome if not noxious nitrogenous mouth-air that I knew would be the primary sensation accompanying its drinking.

The ideal here specified by means of the negative: A thickness like that of honey, and not of honey that runs as fast as honey as warm as this coffee would; a warmth visible in crema of the color that nuts acquire when they are toasted (i.e., the Baudelaire-abstraction of a visible fact that results from the abstract subtraction of an untoasted nut, whether hazelnut or chestnut, from a toasted one).

It occurs to me that here Gaggia is not a bad objective-correlative for me, me a person, me in my capacity of artist. Sometimes I am fine-tuned and out of me flows liquid gold (the persistent presence of piss brings a smile, but here, with the smile, I mean honey, espresso), often I am not, and in those moments the refuse becomes all I am, and I am the object of as much deserved scorn as is Gaggia ("piss water," I said, and there was no love in my voice, to understate). But it's imperative to immediately note that what I am pointing to as adequate objective-correlative is not a machine, just as what Duchamp draws in "Coffee Mill" and "Chocolate Grinder" are not diagrams of machines; they do not, precisely, have the status which is implied by the concept of "machine." Nor am I just invoking the facile spectrum-unity of tool and machine that "gotcha"-compares computers to paintbrushes. Rather what this objective-correlative (Gaggia) and what Duchamp draws have in common is precisely what their diagrammatic status reveals: that they are knots, prisms, even, through which pass rays of light or flows (in-flows of electric current and filtered water, out-flows of liquid gold, through-flows of all impenetrable-unimaginable kinds which only begin with pressure and heat and extend through all of what we cannot name, "inside" the "soul").

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28 June 2025

Yeseterday at 4 a.m., having been awoken, probably, by the red wine we had with dinner (an effect that I really hate, if indeed it's true; my mother and her mother both held it so), I lay in bed and these lines settled in my head:

And go now let me sing of a time when
Under milk green hill and pain of perjury
Ludovic Nemo did a stout silence keep
And choked against it these tumbleform years
And strained and slipped that the blanket white night
Keep clean of him, his jester's gesture word.

So I suppose this belongs in the aggregation of excrescences of the sleeping-waking oscillation, as a sort of misfire.

Snorkel/spearfishing: For one of the bathings

One of the bathing sequences ought to be a tropical snorkel, with all that I had planned for that idea once; then maybe there is spearfishing there too, spearfishing in a survivor-tropical way, the thought of spearfishing in the mind of a snorkeler (duality between very Catholic "it's ok to eat fish because they don't have any feelings" and on the other hand the fact that he had a pet betta (rumble fish, and the beautiful Matisse-goldfish-red betta in the tank in Severance, like reminding me of that iPhone aquarium app)); also the Avventura spearfisher and the attendant fantasy of subsisting off spearfishing, and then Picasso ritually-indulgently bathing in that same sea (what is there to catch? Those nearly-meatless rockfish (the gorgeously optically-active but venomous rascasse, or red scorpionfish; sea robin, resembling nothing so much as a leathery osteoporotic old man; the world's heaviest eel, the European conger; and, if your luck is extreme, the horrid monkfish, that abomination, whose other names "frogfish" and "sea-devil" reveal only a sliver of the visual and tactile aspect) that go into bouillabaisse? What did Picasso get from it? Can I assemble a total catalogue of all his fruits de mer in every still life ever? Can I do to something what he did to the oursins (many of them are kept in Antibes, but I mean all of them)? What in the Raphael et Fornarina suite resembles the urchins (the answer is clear and it's quite a striking figure)?).

Wolves: Something to thread intricately throughout all (or at least spanning all) the dream sequences

Think of My last wolf (vaguely) but REALLY see if there's something I can do with what Bella said would be a better version of the "famous" dream analysis of Freud's "wolf man" (it's in a voice memo from 12 February 2025; it realizes an idea from (I think) 2023 that I felt enormously strongly about) (also Picasso Steinberg, philosophical

brothel; also Matisse musicians, werewolf malchiki)

And: Think about incorporating versions of wolf man dream into various sleeping and waking sequences in the plan; also think about assembling as many different interpretations of the original signification-less sentence (chaque jour … dernier loup) as possible, and layering each one on, one by one, until finally it becomes clear that all that they all had in common was the original sentence itself

Also note possible necessity of establishing a certain relation to Matthew Barney's Redoubt

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From Thomas the Obscure, this line, in isolation, has resonance applicable to Ludovic:

"... reminiscence, so that, as this false figure emerged from the shadows, acquiring through a useless meticulousness a greater and greater precision and a more and more artificial one, she herself, the narrator, already condemned and delivered into the hands of the devils, would bind herself unpardonably to the true figure, of which she would know nothing. / "What you are...," she said.... And as she spoke these words, she seemed to dance around him and, fleeing him at the same time, to push him into an imaginary wolf-trap. "What you are…."/ She could not speak, and yet she was speaking. Her tongue vibrated in such a way that she seemed to express the meanings …"

Ludovic and his world: topoi, aspects

I think Ludovic is from there but living in this room (with his back to the large armoire) in Los Angeles:
Find out whether there is a town in Belgium even more so than Sint Martens Latem; where is Sebastian from and what were those metallic reliefs?

Etc.

But the auratic substance of his story--even just as a fiction! That those in Ghent who know in closed rooms know where the missing panel of the altarpiece is and know, further, that it is in Ghent--that Ludovic lives today and in some other century, being, in

other words, that Ludovic lives in the time of this fiction (if it is taken as fiction, not at all that this is the only way in which to take his story)--

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Hôtel de longchamp, etc.: The Paris of “le souffleur” is so distinctive; what hôtel in Los Angeles could have an article written about it by K., what brasserie could (like Lipp) have managers with intrigue-knowledge crucial to the plot, etc.?

[Addition 31 May 2025:]

Was Lipp the brasserie where London Helly gave an interview? Yes: “He asks what I will drink. Whatever you do, I say. ‘But you might not like that!’ he exclaims, requesting vodka and orange juice. I order a coupe de champagne, to celebrate his exhibition.” … The overriding message of great artists is that they appreciate the hidden—that is, what’s real,” Nahmad opens. “They counter material reality. These glasses,”—he takes a couple from the table and slams them down again loudly—“these are invented, just an illusion. Brasserie Lipp,” a wave of the hand spans busy tables and gliding waiters — “all this is meaningless. The reason I love what I do is that we are close to people and things made by people saying, ‘I exist and this is how I feel.’” [He proceeds to cancel the vodka and orders champagne along with the two most expensive things on the menu: Foie gras (there’s some kind of liver damage joke to make here) and sole meunière.] “The sole, perfectly filleted, buttery, succulent, is served, with new potatoes. Nahmad ignores the vegetables and approaches the fish methodically, preoccupied again with his exhibition.”

There is much window, wall, ceiling here, but it doesn’t feel first-principles-amenable, it’s a dazzling, instead, of reflection and glass, even more so than that Bonnard (which, for what it’s worth, plots a middle ground on the way from manageable-schematic to dazzling).

Relation of all Reverdy’s room-figurations (in Au soleil du plafond etc.) (see many notes toward this via Schroeder , in the 25_05

document) to Derrida's sublime ("high up, but still under, maybe just under") and Hölderlin; my own garret, my mountain / mist (that I always say I walk up into, unto disappearance, etc.: Ludovic
Jockeys and grooms might be good figures to make to pass through L's room, up high, but with a crucially important ceiling and distinctive window that I'd like to charge (in words and in painting) with the same manifold status that Reverdy's wall (and lucarne and plafond) take on (see Schroeder's discussion of Au soleil du plafond and Jockeys camouflés). Are these grooms and jockeys to be artists by other names? What about wolves? What about a third, more L.A. species of person? Or am I to charge all I've ever found in any artist (in the "painting / re-symbolism" doc, eg) into a figure (as bisexual as god or as an angel or as the mage in the Redon etching or as the philosopher of Schutz) which can hold all the valences of all art I've ever known (all those traces left on a wall - see Jockeys discussion) in his / her own hand-registration (-history): by means, perhaps, of a taxonomy like that I ideate in parallel to Grotjahn at that one energetic point in the "painting / re-Symbolism" doc.
[Addition 23 May 2025: Grooms to be another class appended to that of horse-dealers: and they can be imbued with the traits of conservators, e.g. forming a committee or a panel and publishing notes, and errata, and addenda, which are to derive their form and much of their language from the aggregated emissions of the Getty panel painting initiative, but all of this unsubtly having subbed-out a less-than-complete portion of its medium-specific vocabulary for a different one, namely that of horses. / And the grooms also have something to do with racing specifically, and greyhounds, and Bacon's memory of the estate in Ireland, which is also to be superposed onto Ludovic's memory of his site of origin.]
Anyway in my still lives the wall is a hugely important figure, as manifold and important as it is for Twombly Farber Baer Martinez, say. There ought not always to be a "still life" (at least as conventionally understood) before this manifold. In other words, it might be time I stop calling them by that name and start calling them "paintings."

I think I've got it: the horse dealers that he has to ring up, and that he has to go out and see (maybe because of an "uncle" who may or may not be the omnibenevolent magus; maybe he has to go out and see them at a former hotel with ornate wrought-brass grille and buzzer system from the 1920s, from just after the war which in this 30s-moment (this is where we are, at times, though it is unstated) is still called "the war") and not transact with (and every time he sees them he remains chaste, it seems, an utterly static commitment in speech, and yet it becomes unclear the next time around whether he has really transacted with them), they are to be the embodiment of

everything deadened, everything that is capital, everything that is kitsch, everything that is commodified, everything that misses aesthesis unredeemably.
They always ask him doesn't he want to deal in horses, and he always has to tell them no, he longer deals in horses, no, he never dealt in horses; and they tell him but you are only seventeen, you have a beautiful career in dealing horses ahead of you, a face as clear and a body as lithe and a frame as neutrally august as yours cannot be allowed to pass this world (of horse dealing) by without making good on all of the advantage nascent in it; and he has to tell them, again and again, I do not deal in horses. And I am not seventeen any longer. (Though somehow it must be that he is getting even younger: when next they insist, they are insisting that he is sixteen, that they were just consulting his medical records (what checks do they perform on racehorses?) and--what athletically pure numbers, by the way--they were certain, they had to look twice because they could have vouched they were quite certain he had been seventeen, but, yes, it's true, they checked, his date of birth appeared on each page in the same lower corner, they remember it well, and did he know by the way that he shares it with __ (someone a stand-in for 22 Sep Blanchot, or Michelangelo's birth chart or Mozart or van der Goes or Hölderlin or so forth). …
The horse dealers bring to him all thoughts frictional, all that is frictional, all that chokes me, all the strain I've ever registered in these documents: They are to bring it to him, so that all that is born of Ludovic, all that comes through him from out of the empty space as whose conduit he is perpetually situated, is nothing but the fruit of the pure in spirit, nothing but pure spirit itself.
The horse dealers offer him always visions of the pearl-encrusted and gold-inlaid allure that is his rightful inheritance, that he must not only decline but whose allure he must negate unto (and through) vanishing, and he must bear witness to this in his declining while experiencing no magnetism (and it would be known if he did).
Perhaps it is in the exchanges with the horse dealers that I, like Klossowski (in Le souffleur? I think it was in "Prose of Actaeon" that this was pointed out, or maybe it was in some other preface or postface), can cycle through all the formalisms of formal (scholastic? legal? Logical? No: formal) language, all the forms which conjugate the wide array of rhetoric-standard propositional possibility in the conjugational register. And these are to be experienced, by the reader, as frictional sites of resistance met and pushed-beyond on the way to and from the unional instances of contact with the void which, I still think, are to have my found-and-posed letters to Belle as their stand-in--sites of friction met and pushed through on the way to each of these tangent-points from the sensory-detail-attention-fixation and unlimited-zoom and free-conjunctive image-language dreamland, and on the way thence back to it, too.

I think Ludovic ought to be accompanied by a “wolf of a dog,” said, maybe, near the end, and maybe only once, to never leave his side; probably it will be Maddie’s malinois, described as with her unique way of walking, utter timidity, way of moving around less alike other dogs than to a Roomba or a praying mantis, but carrying with her everywhere, as a lithe glowing shadow, the august figure of the paragon of lupine domestication she could have been, instilling fear while exuding elegance, silent in spirit and silent in step, powerful but to no compromise of quickness. (Think also of the poet’s dog in Nostalghia)

Besides Sint-Martens-Latem there is Attert, the richest municipality in Belgium by GDP per capita; Etalle, in roughly second place, with a beautiful name; these two are right along the Luxembourgish border. Then there is Kraainem, the wealthiest municipality in Flanders. But the Lampens house, the brutalist one with the wood-grain indulgence, the one I loved, which is exceeding even among its ideological peers for its resemblance to a bunker, is in Sint-Martens-Latem, outside of Ghent.

The house was renovated by the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, which I’ve also been focused on recently; they are currently showing Calvin Marcus’s skin paintings, and also painters from the loose-knit community along the Leie in collaboration with the Museum van Deinze en de Leiestreek.

It appears that Kraainem is also notable for its architecture.

(It’s not clear what town these last few are in.)

I’m in love with almost all the houses Hannes Coudenys has catalogued as “ugly Belgian.” https://www.dezeen.com/2015/04/05/ugly-belgian-houses-hannes-coudenys-archive-unattractive-architecture/

The studio-home of Raoul de Keyser, through photographs and through his paintings, is quintessential.

It must be that Ludovic’s home is the Van Wassenhove House by Juliaan Lampens, but perhaps it has aspects of these Kraainem houses; and that he has uncles in Etalle and Kraainem; the details, landforms, colors, plantlife, and public architecture (streets, sidewalks, forms of roadway network and footpath, marsh, snow) all derived from among all these places, with their distinctive and quite recognizable take on the “luxury modern villa.”

(This “take” has something also shared with places in Ireland, such as Sligo or Wexford, the later due to someone named Lukas Hendriks, a USC student whom I met in two Beverly Hills galleries).

Maybe an “uncle” is named Félicien Rodenbach, and is therefore as belge as any of Mallarmé’s amis, and it will be said of him that he “read” something (an activity akin to those of the agents of Le souffleur, writing and publishing such that a title bearing their name can be stumbled upon) at Brasserie Lipp, and what he read may be Mallarmé’s “Remémoration” or Rops’s ex libris for Poésies. The perversion of Rops being suitable for an “oncle,” an alchemist of Le souffleur’s type; the incorporeality of the instrument-manipulating hands being a sublimely adequate correlative for the abstraction of the motion (dynamic equilibrium, wave-oscillating harmony-stasis) of which the “Remémoration” is a literary-material crystallization. [One more quality appended: The pile of laurel-crowned skulls conjures a specific aspect of an idea of the Parnassians: That, perhaps in Montparnasse, perhaps not far from Lipp, their meetings were suffused with the same air that made one of them (Coppée?) an anti-Dreyfusard; this same wickedness reaching through Blanchot’s writings of the 1930s

(?) to the journal for which Mathieu produced an emblem, and coiling neatly under the same allure-sign which I created for that knot around the Nahmads.

À des heures et sans que tel souffle l’émeuve
Toute la vétusté presque couleur encens
Comme furtive d’elle et visible je sens
Que se dévêt pli selon pli la pierre veuve

Flotte ou semble par soi n’apporter une preuve
Sinon d’épandre pour baume antique le temps
Nous immémoriaux quelques-uns si contents
Sur la soudaineté de notre amitié neuve

Ô très chers rencontrés en le jamais banal
Bruges multipliant l’aube au défunt canal
Avec la promenade éparse de maint cygne

Quand solennellement cette cité m’apprit
Lesquels entre ses fils un autre vol désigne
À prompte irradier ainsi qu’aile l’esprit.

Three things; the old mirror in there catches his eye, and Time slows down. Face, follow the hanging arms, pop the fingers, then turn away. Ludovic Nemo stretches his member out of its undergarment to empty the piss out of him, stretches it rather much, to clear the waistband of his slacks. (Jos. A. Bank comment) He doesn’t unbutton them because he doesn’t have to. Their waist is big. He keeps them up with a belt, but he’s been wearing them for eight years. He graduated from high school and from college (replace these with their Belgian names or wherever he was schooled: say, graduated from his Internat and Hochschule in them, from Schloss Salem and the Städelschule) in them. He received a ring from his monk in them. … (insert something about stretching the member, first pulling without resistance, and after an imperceptible interval of this beginning to encounter increasing resistance until he’s stretched out as much clearance as he’s going to get and it’s time to apply gentle downward pressure to the inelastic waistband and

relax his pelvic floor.)

I need these horses for my horse-dealers:

I need these pipes for my Brasserie Lipp and my Closerie des Lilas:
Jacques Villon, “Têtes de pipes” (1945).

“Pipes en terre” (1945).

Landsknechte all these horse-dealers, freiherren all, and freiherren with titles won by halberd, won not by merit but in the transfigurative (yes, transfiguration is bivalent, not always salvific) incendium of their codpieces in a rage the question of whose justice or lack thereof is beside the point as soon as its fire catches.

Cf. Hauser on Pontormo: “The guards in The Resurrection not only recall Dürer’s lansquenets, not only provide a striking foreground and draw a magic circle round the figure of Christ, but their whole physical constitution and attitude also have an earthly weight and substance which provide the desired impact by their contrast with the transfigured body of the Redeemer, His weightlessness and spirituality and His soaring towards heaven” (187 – 188).

Mage!: “The oddities are immediately striking: beside a ruined monument set amid tree-trunks a distinctive assemblage of figures - a magus, youths clothed and naked, an occasional impassive woman and grouped torsos bearing massive heads - is looking at a curious array of stuffs, including decapitated heads, burning altars, punchinellos, snake-entwined staffs, owls and bits of sculpted reliefs. There is precedence for Tiepolo's manner of etching and the mysterious trappings in the etchings of the seventeenth-century Castiglione. Perhaps, in the materials depicted, as in the puzzlement they provoke, Tiepolo was coming up with a new pictorial equivalent to the 'incantesimo" or sorcery commonly attributed to Veronese. But the Scherzi remain elusive, haunting. Convinced that there is a code to break, some modern commentators have invoked the practice of alchemy, magic and the specialized taste of collectors as explanation. They have not had much success. What can be said pictorially is that the mysterious array of objects that puzzles the commentators was designed to provoke the curiosity and attention of the assembled beholders. They are not essential: a pen-and-wash drawing for the Scherzo of The Magician and Other Figures looking at a Burning Pyre with a Man's Head shows the attitudes in place without the trappings (pl. 19).”

And: That river-gods are uncle-alchemists, too.

"After us the savage god" (Yeats?), In the twilight of an empire, golden filaments invisible through the haze, glimmers latent in the dark, light at which we can only grope, under the spell of the witch-god who has succeeded to the old one under the same name (invisible cities 30-31: "At times even the names of the inhabitants remain the same, and their voices' accent, and also the features of the faces; but the gods who live beneath names and above places have gone off without a word and outsiders [algorithm, capital, commodified attention] have settled in their place. It is pointless to ask whether the new ones are better than the old, since there is no connection between them ..."; I think of Paris, which I cannot live in because it is no longer there, the Brasserie Lipp and the Closerie des Lilas now themselves phantasmagoria of even the same Klossowskian sort that always filled them). The savage god who rapes eyes, rapes unto senselessness. We live in his city now (Los Angeles), a city of the second kind here: "[there are] those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires [Paris, Venice; these desires, then, are dreams, imagination], and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it [Los Angeles, Moscow, Beijing, now all; these desires are the totalizing ones, capital, spectacle, control]" (35).

In come the horse dealers. (Through their mouths speaks the savage god.)

Here (in Tomkins's Duchamp) is where the Closerie des Lilas differentiates itself from the (flashier? More Eiffel-tower-like) Flore and Deux Magots, meriting, beyond them, status akin to that which Brasserie Lipp has acquired for me. "A group of Cubist-influenced artists, most of whom had been painting until recently in the Fauve style, began to meet regularly in 1910 at one another's studios and at the Closerie des Lilas, the famous old Montparnasse cafe, where the Tuesday evening gatherings sponsored by Paul Fort's literary journal, Vers et Prose, brought together the older generation of Symbolist poets and writers and the rising generation of artists. The Cubist group-Robert Delaunay, Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Henri Le Fauconnier, Fernand Léger, and one or two others -felt the need to discuss and analyze the radical innovations of Picasso and Braque: the flattening out of pictorial space within the painting, so that a picture was no longer a window to look through but an object in itself; the fusion of image with background; the juxtaposition of representational and abstract elements; and, most strikingly, the shifting point of view that depicted objects within the painting from different angles simultaneously" (49).

And: "Many of these artists, including the Duchamp brothers, attended the Monday evening meetings at Gleizes's studio in the suburb

of Courbevoie, and they also went to the Tuesday night soirées at the Closerie des Duchamp took a very minor part in the discussions and arguments at these meetings. A listener rather than a talker, he was still somewhat in the shadow of his older brothers, especially Raymond, whom he admired to the point of hero worship. Among the Cubists' favorite subjects of debate, though, at least two held special interest for Duchamp. One was the search for an art that would engage the mind as well as the eye; the other was the fourth dimension” (57).

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6 June 2025

I think I want to appropriate for Ludovic the episode of Duchamp and Gabrielle and the Jura, but make it uncertain to which of them is attached the apparatus of impossibility of the love (the apparatus that is the immovable object against which the desire has to press in order to derive its force, like locomotion by reverse osmosis).
To which of them the apparatus is attached: By that I mean, which of them is a fast fish harpooned and bound fast to the hull, an opium-smoking and fast-car-driving spouse and children.
That indeterminacy (to which of them those attributes are attached) can be introduced, maybe, somewhere in the middle of the narration of the episode with the train station and the letters.
And the fast-car-driving opium-smoking spouse should also be extended with the attributes of Jarry in addition to Picabia: He is to have the habit of calling his bicycle whatever Jarry called it, and the precocious imagination of a marionette play back in school (as described by Tomkins, of course).
Whereas to Ludovic is to be attributed all the many things Tomkins takes it upon himself to say about Ducamp's own handsome appearance, impeccably suave and simple manner, especially as a newcomer to Paris and even more especially as a newcomer to New York.

On the “Ludovic” side of the conjunction “Ludovic and his world”:

I recently (re-?)discovered Karl Walser, Robert’s older brother (moving slowly to Berlin where Karl already was involved was similar for Robert to what moving to Paris was for Duchamp with respect to Villon and Duchamp-Villon, it seems).

Anyway, I gather these drawings because, while they do not fit neatly or directly under the heading of “Dandy,” they are suffused, for me, with something that my idea of “dandy” absolutely cannot

breathe without. I am of course speaking, here, right around Ludovic Nemo. Anyway:

Even down to the loaded relation to the window, the proto-Kafka uneasiness of the crowding of the flat (these aren't horse-dealers, but they may as well be),

Even--with what feels like the turning of a key, once thought lost, deep under my diaphragm--this image which does not precisely illustrate a dream I once had, maybe five or six years ago, but which captures what beneath the detail was really happening in that dream, if I transpose my own point-of-view into this pierrot, a move which comes by all accounts quite naturally to me.

Several other of his drawings, like this one, make palpable the way my dreams always have a vibratory sort of blur and an unpinnable sense of expansion or slipping at the seams or overlaps between the Merleau-Pontyian planes whose superposition forms a “singular” consciousness-instant-slice.

I regret the liberty of cropping but the immediately above also illustrates the thereabove.
By way of outro: A veritable conjugation of dandiform types.

On the setting (Spa towns, etc.):

Not that this isn’t already treated, if glancingly, in more significant terms elsewhere; still, why not re-start a partial list?:

https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1613/gallery/&maxrows=39
I think the above link (alternate access: here) might, though laughable in its standardization, point me to an evocative way in which material has been archived unto “historical significance” in the UNESCO sense.

Spa: Setting of Belle, which I loved both reasonlessly less than and exactly much as I had ought to; partial setting of Barry Lyndon, which might be the best film I still have not yet seen because I still hold out for a theatrical screening); irrelevantly, birthplace of Hercule Poirot; possibly relevantly (I have not yet redeemed, but might

eventually redeem, the aristocratic tradition of becoming a racecar driver--not, at least, besides recurrently admiring the below paintings by Alexa Hawksworth exhibited at Theta), site of the Circuit Spa-Francorchamps.

Maybe most importantly: As it is in the Ardennes, in Wallonia, it justifies the French spelling “Ludovic.”

Could I elevate racing to the same status that fencing attained in that Kleist thought-story? My hunch still tells me no.

Literary-material voices from which to derive various points on the sleep-wake oscillation-curve

I read the beginning of Thomas the Obscure with a feeling--too familiar to be passionate, but unmistakable--of the kind of recognition that, so the cliché has it, breeds envy. What I mean is that I know myself to be intimately capable of this same kind of sensory détournant-microscopy, which also reminds one of Saoirse Bertram’s “Liebesleid” or Laszlo Horvath’s “Memory is a Toy.”

A powerful association for the immersion-sited body-self-decomposition with which I will scan my oscillatory work. (Of course I do not believe so much in the use of literature as means to “critique” the “subject”; a new suppôt reconstitutes itself, no matter what you want to call it. Only a true extreme-experience of aesthesis, true ekstasis, and I am still not sure whether even Bataille was really experiencing that (though I am playing along), deranges the “self” in so real a way as to put it under serious threat, into serious question, as so many theorists desire. The uncanny cannot be parceled out and bottled. Every painting is a new demand.)

Anyway, here is that opening, for convenient reference:

“THOMAS SAT DOWN and looked at the sea. He remained motionless for a time, as if he had come there to follow the movements of the other swimmers and, although the fog prevented him from seeing very far, he stayed there, obstinately, his eyes fixed on the bodies floating with difficulty. Then, when a more powerful wave reached him, he went down onto the sloping sand and slipped among the currents, which quickly immersed him. The sea was calm, and Thomas was in the habit of swimming for long periods without tiring. But today he had

chosen a new route. The fog hid the shore. A cloud had come down upon the sea and the surface was lost in a glow which seemed the only truly real thing. Currents shook him, though without giving him the feeling of being in the midst of the waves and of rolling in familiar elements. The conviction that there was, in fact, no water at all made even his effort to swim into a frivolous exercise from which he drew nothing but discouragement, Perhaps he should only have had to get control of himself to drive away such thoughts, but his eye found nothing to cling to, and it seemed to him that he was staring into the void with the intention of finding help there. It was then that the sea, driven by the wind, broke loose. The storm tossed it, scattered it into inaccessible regions; the squalls turned the sky upside down and, at the same time, there reigned a silence and a calm which gave the impression that everything was already destroyed. Thomas sought to free himself from the insipid flood which was invading him. A piercing cold paralyzed his arms. The water swirled in whirlpools. Was it actually water? One moment the foam leapt before his eyes in whitish flakes, the next the absence of water took hold of his body and drew it along violently. His breathing became slower; for a few moments he held in his mouth the liquid which the squalls drove against his head: a tepid sweetness, strange brew of a man deprived of the sense of taste. Then, whether from fatigue or for an unknown reason, his limbs gave him the same sense of foreignness as the water in which they were tossed. This feeling seemed almost pleasant at first. As he swam, he pursued a sort of revery in which he confused himself with the sea. The intoxication of leaving himself, of slipping into the void, of dispersing himself in the thought of water, made him forget every discomfort. And even when this ideal sea which he was becoming ever more intimately had in turn become the real sea, in which he was virtually drowned, he was not moved as he should have been: of course, there was something intolerable about swimming this way, aimlessly, with a body which was of no use to him beyond thinking that he was swimming, but he also experienced a sense of relief, as if he had finally discovered the key to the situation, and, as far as he was concerned, it all came down to continuing his endless journey, with an absence of organism in an absence of sea. The illusion did not last. He was forced to roll from one side to the other, like a boat adrift, in the water which gave him a body to swim. What escape was there? To struggle in order not to be carried away by the wave which was his arm? To go under? To drown himself bitterly in himself? That would surely have been the moment to stop, but a hope remained; he went on swimming as if, deep within the restored core of his being, he had discovered a new possibility. He swam, a monster without fins. Under the giant microscope, he turned himself into an enterprising mass of cilia and vibrations. The temptation took on an entirely bizarre character when he sought to slip from the drop of water into a region which was vague and yet infinitely precise, a sort of holy place, so perfectly suited to him that it was enough for him to be there, to be; it was like an imaginary hollow which he entered because, before he was there, his imprint was there already. And so he made a last effort

to fit completely inside. It was easy; he encountered no obstacles; he rejoined himself; he blended with himself, entering into this place which no one else could penetrate.
“At last he had to come back. He found his way easily and his feet touched bottom at a place which some of the swimmers used for diving. The fatigue was gone. He still had a humming in his ears and a burning in his eyes, as might be expected after staying too long in the salt water. He became conscious of this as, turning toward the infinite sheet of water reflecting the sun, he tried to tell in which direction he had gone. At that point, there was a real mist before his sight, and he could pick out absolutely anything in this murky void which his gaze penetrated feverishly. Peering out, he discovered a man who was swimming far off, nearly lost below the horizon. At such a distance, the swimmer was always escaping him. He would see him, then lose sight of him, though he had the feeling that he was following his every move: not only perceiving him clearly all the time, but being brought near him in a completely intimate way, such that no other sort of contact could have brought him closer. He stayed a long time, watching and wait-ing. There was in this contemplation something painful which resembled the manifestation of an excessive freedom, a freedom obtained by breaking every bond. His face clouded over and took on an unusual expression.”
And the second part, where “HE NEVERTHELESS DECIDED to turn his back to the sea and entered a small woods where he lay down after taking a few steps” and then he is in that hole or hollow or grave, affords ample more of just what I’m talking about.

That Ludovic Nemo is to be doubled, as I once suggested; that, like Asle’s namesake and the double in Souffleur, their conflation is to reach the apogee of its tension in that it renders love impossible and uniquely possible, in that they share every climax, or share in missing it, absented always simultaneously and at the other’s expense; and between them (in two senses) are such extases (violent and erotic) as “Even when lovers twist their naked bodies, skin against skin, seeking the position that will give one the most pleasure in the other, even when murderers plunge the knife into the black veins of the neck and more clotted blood pours out the more they press the blade that slips between the tendons …” (53) and “conversations, surprises, caresses, bites … meetings, seductions, copulations, orgies are consummated among them without a word exchanged, without a finger touching anything, almost without an eye raised” (51) and “At any hour, raising your eyes among the pipes, you are likely to glimpse a young woman, or many young women, slender, not talk of stature, luxuriating in the bathtubs or arching their backs under the showers suspended in the void, washing or drying or perfuming themselves, or combing their long hair at a mirror. In the sun, the threads of water

fanning from the showers glisten, the jets of the taps, the spurts, the splashes, the sponges' suds" (49) and "in Hypatia you have to go to the stables and rising rings to see the beautiful women who mount the saddle, thighs naked, greaves on their calves, and as soon as the young foreigner approaches, they fling him on the piles of hay or sawdust and press their firm nipples against him" (48).

Things a choked painter thinks

Like being choked with rage but without any rage. Subtract rage from the idea of being choked with rage (which I never have been; I just get this phrase from Klossowski) and what remains is something like "the choked or suffocated or gagged silence of Hantaï" (5 April 2024).

I think there is something in "painting / re-Symbolism" concerning this, something about walking, perhaps

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There are countless suitable notes in "painting / re-Symbolism"; it's just a question of whose or what sort of mouth I can put them in: Do I need to transpose them into the third person? Do I need to have them spoken to stunned-silent Ludovic at his desk? Can he just "think them at" his interlocutors while maintaining mum?

Stray notes

Rilke's Sonnet II, 14, I think, would make a perfect epigraph to my oscillatory work; perhaps just the last six lines, or perhaps my own translation of the last six lines, so it doesn't have to say "meadows" (I'd translate it "clearing," and I'd probably have to change some other things, too). But do they read well enough on their own, or do they need the "Look at the flowers," etc.?

"Look at the flowers, so faithful to what is earthly,
to whom we lend fate from the very border of fate.
And if they are sad about how they must wither and die,
perhaps it is our vocation to be their regret.

All Things want to fly. Only we are weighed down by desire,
caught in ourselves and enthralled with our heaviness.
Oh what consuming, negative teachers we are
for them, while eternal childhood fills them with grace.

If someone were to fall into intimate slumber, and slept
deeply with Things--: how easily he would come
to a different day, out of the mutual depth.

Or perhaps he would stay there; and they would blossom and praise
their newest convert, who now is like one of them,
all those silent companions in the wind of the meadows."

One way to make sure the dissolving sleeps come across as death-coded is to reproduce as a passing thought whatever Ratzinger said about sleep, as part of his making a case for the active presence and integration of death in life (television: "death embracing life" and tempest: "rounded with a sleep")

"In lands transalpine and futures remembered, …."
Thus could begin another of the chapters of my oscillatory "espresso cup" work, which, recall, are always to begin in the chaosmos / matrixial borderspace of "dream" "language" which is not properly a language (not consisting of signs) but rather a phantasmagoria of simulacra such as Foucault constitutes that notion in his "prose of Actaeon" for Klossowski. One of the greatest / deepest senses that I hope will set in, on the far side of all the oscillations, will be that the movement out of and back into the regime of simulacra will be so continuous, so seamless, so ineluctably retraced, bearing always a trace of both previous and subsequent repetitions of the same (the oscillation), that any facile idea of the distinction between the modes of sleep and waking will be blown apart, and out of the resultant rawness (possibility) I will present (again by repeated presentings) my own notion of "an artistic act," the closest prismatic persons can come to what was in times past thought of as the Utterance of a signifying Word by a Subject, which is now seen to bear more resemblance to hesychastic repetitions of the name of God (l'innommable), and to things Harpham talks about in his "aesthetic imperative", than to any familiar notion of speech.

Also note my dreamland (my “lands transalpine”) will be brim-full of Malteseness—things actually, in large part, derived from obscure Maltese history and histories of many other transalpine zones (Montaillou, Basque lands, Bohemia, Hungary, Finland, Flanders, Mathieu’s imagination of Capetiens, Flaubert’s Saint Antoine (in connection with what Klossowski or Foucault has to say about such Christians as that desert hermit, in contact with the demons of a Greek or Egyptian or otherwise pagan past—Mesopotamian? Celtic? Gothic? Slavonic?)

These thoughts being scaffolded by The Baphomet; here are a couple of details that I noted:

This is valuable building-out of the Prospero / alchemist / sorcerer / astrologer / Dana Schutz “Philosopher” / Bon Dieu figure / demiurge that I am ever at work upon, that figures centrally for me, I was lately given cause to remember, already in Ludovic Nemo, who in his first moments has presented a longing after a master (a printmaker, specializing in etching, as it happened). “The latter (who some claimed was German and called Wallhauser, while others claimed was a Sicilian named Fra Sylvano) was versed as much in astrology aS in medicinal botany, and had won the blind confidence of Madame de Palençay not only through predictions of his own that had come true, but also through operations that demonstrated the efficacy of his knowledge: they said that from afar he was capable of re-creating in the minds of others the image of a person he immersed in sleep; having subjected his pupil to such experiments, he no doubt exercised an irresistible influence over the young Ogier.”

The first section of the above (which I reproduce: “... the one of her nephew's two tutors whom she preferred. The first, a Burgundian clergyman and chaplain of Palençay, later asserted that the second had been the cause of all the woe that followed. The latter (who some claimed was German and called Wallhauser, while others claimed was a Sicilian named Fra Sylvano) was versed as much in astrology as in medicinal botany …”) is separately useful to me because it reminds me of, and furnishes luminous referents for, the floating nature (always from elsewhere, perhaps in some sense exiled) of sages in this world of hermits and of Kells-knowledge confined (albeit porously) to precious scriptoria. The person of Barlaam of Calabria, be his positions what they were, furnishes another. And all of this furthers my notion of Malteseness.

I want to retain the figure (or topos) of backgammon, and its archaic French proto-form, and in particular whatever board game appears in that one Baugin. Prompted by this: “At the beginning of the week, they began, the said Brother de Malvoisie and Brother Lahire de Champsceaux had met in the refectory of the lay Brethren to play chess, and it soon appeared to the witnesses that, as far as they could follow the exchange between said knights, keeping to the background, the game's stakes were not some prized object or sum of money, but the very person of the young Ogier, Lord of Beauséant, enlisted in the services of Brother Lahire.”

“Sylvano was clever enough to dissuade her at first from pursuing such an outcome. ‘You must know, Madame,’ he said to her, ‘that every prophet is always an impostor. Everything he says in a figurative sense will be interpreted to the letter by ambition; that is why refusing to take his words literally makes a prophet of an impostor.’” This reminded me of the climactic gypsy fortune-teller episode of Michael Kohlhaas—the gypsy herself being a (Klossowskian) double, that of the wife, la morte.

I need to maybe give Ludovic a home like Brigge’s Ulsgaard; what was that book with the affluent Belgian town of the horses and horse-tranquilizers (and, perhaps, horse-dealers, and an Uncle)?

[It was Amalia Ulman’s “My Dog, My Husband, My Son,” published in Heavy Traffic; the publication had just given a fragment, “that mysterious mental illness that made her live in the stables of her grandfather’s estate in Sint-Martens-Latem for more than a month, living on carrots and ketamine alone,” which, lacking even an author name, was all I knew, until, after days of searching in different ways, I found the full text on Ulman’s Substack.

I hardly need to say how this insight arrives to me, me with my exquisitely bad memory, making Bella and everyone wonder whether I’m even alive, me with my eyes with no life behind them, me in my constant dismay at my lack of presence of mind except in those handful of flashes per day (and only on perfectly-arranged days without incident in the morning). “Proust had a bad memory—as he had an inefficient habit, because he had an inefficient habit. The man with a good memory does not remember anything because he does not forget anything. … Strictly speaking, we can only remember what has been registered by our extreme inattention and stored in that ultimate and inaccessible dungeon of our being to which Habit does not possess the key, and does not need to, because it contains none of the hideous and useful paraphernalia of war. But here, in that 'gouffre interdit à nos sondes,' is stored the essence of ourselves, the best of our many selves and their concretions that simplists call the world, the best because accumulated slyly and painfully and patiently under the nose of our vulgarity, the fine essence of a smothered divinity whose

whispered 'disfazione' is drowned in the healthy bawling of an all-embracing appetite, the pearl that may give the lie to our carapace of paste and pewter. May--when we escape into the spacious annexe of mental alienation, in sleep or the rare dispensation of waking madness. From this deep source Proust hoisted his world" (17 - 19).

And when I need stand-in names to be able to use all I've written as "re-Symbolism" notes, to make palpable the fil lumineux, the tensing of which is, really, the whole weight of the gesture of making my only spare marks to be (puttiphallic) studies after the master, I can use names like Bernard (or a Magyarized version thereof: Bernát) Marton, or Frei Carlos (or his full name, though he doesn't seem to have had one), or K (as in The blower), or Paul Ricard (and perhaps names from Grasse or César Birotteau*), or Dun Karm Psaila (or forgotten but recorded créés of the Maltese order du fil des années), or Pangur Bán, or (to confuse) Sarah, Monika, even Lucy, Emma, to all of whom, each time wholly and anew, he submits (disciplines, binds) his silverpoint hand."

[* about which I learned from Constance Debré's new excerpt in Harper's: "Little bottles of neon-yellow liquid, the scent of pastis. Paregoric elixir, or tincture of opium, it sounds like something out of César Birotteau. You can buy it over the counter. The instructions say it's to be used to soothe stomachache. All the junkies take it when they need a fix. Burroughs writes about it, and even Joyce in Ulysses. Over the counter, at the end of the Seventies, beginning of the Eighties, that means even kids can buy it."]

On the status of this "oscillatory work":

I can take a cue from the knot which precipitates Patrick Amstutz's "The Christian Bain de diane" (an essay on Klossowski's book, most useful as exemplary of the staggering array of sensitizations latent in the premise of an erudition like Klossowski's):

"Quinsat emphasizes the "series of "tableaux' that glazes Le Bain de Diane" in accordance with a "circular" descriptive movement, he says, "from vision to commentary, attributed to the deferral without end of signs, and which feeds the entire work of Pierre Klossowski" [95]. And if he borrows the term "exegesis" from Foucault to describe the genre of the work, he immediately associates it with that of "narrative." A quarter of a century earlier, a commentary in the new Nouvelle revue française had already underlined the "disconcerting" character of Klossowski's book, by accentuating not

only the strangeness of its thematic, but also the difficulties posed by the uncertainty of its generic belonging (which is echoed by the absent mention of a paratext): the critic, hesitating, suggested somewhat confusedly a typological kinship with philosophical commentary, theological scholasticism, prose poetry, series of paintings, historical narrative and even the analysis of myths [Amer 144].”

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2 July 2025: A finally-satisfying notion of the relation between this “oscillatory” writing and my paintings.

The idea last night, in my mind as a fixed system, that my writing (what I have called my “oscillatory work”) is to be receptacle for every expressive or inscriptive impulse I have, like a scapegoat on which to deposit all that excrescent dross in order to clear a purity (a purity of impulse and thus a purity of content) for my painting. There is one, and then there is the other; there is one that there may be the other; only the latter is art, on spa town’s anti-expressionist terms.

“In my mind as a fixed system”: Immediately as this system-imaged concreted in my head, I was even more enticed by the prevision of setting up this model as (of course) untenable but nonetheless held (tenere) fixed as a model to be ever showably fallen away from, a horizon ever striven toward, the registration (precisely) of this falling-short being a true oscillatory organic unity encompassing both sides (kost-, the rib and shore root), its presentation (making-present), really, being the art-in-and-as-life supervention (simultaneous refutation and realization) of the more rigorous or even formalist fabbro-notion of art which I have often thought of as spa town’s core but which is really more like its skeleton.

And so: Formalize and rigorize this fil lumineux painting practice all the more, Twombly-dedicate each scriptural material datum, let painting itself (drawing after Pontormo, imitating each Vermeer / Balthus / Hammershøi wall, conjugating my variables as did Ryman and Rapson) be the habitus which encompasses performance but is at the same time more than it, performance whose ritual dimension realizes an element that is agnostic to spectation, completely independent of audience.

And, all at the same time, open the taps of “espresso cup,” the taps of Ludovic Nemo: Thinly veil that autofiction, deposit bare notes from bare life, and sublimate every desire. The jouissance of concretizing my very excrement, my living’s dross, and of making to proliferate images that virtually--but for that no less effectively--realize my every desire, attain my every allure.

And each side cannot help but inflect and sustain, contaminate and

nourish, the other. Such is sexual reproduction.

Espresso Cup

Overture (or Prologue, etc.)

I have more memories than if I were a thousand years old.
[Paste I remember my mother lying in state, …]
All that nullity I will spin into prismatically refractive substance of utter clarity.
I will spin all that, but an enormous armoire positively encumbered with bills of sale, gallant verse, warrants, counts of romance, and heavy locks of hair wrapped in receipts, holds fewer secrets than my sad head.
I remember I told my mother (the thing about Frances McDormand; and add that I imagined a depth to this sting correspondent to the depth of the ritual of care with which she tends her image. She does not give herself over to neurotic excess--not my mother--does not baroque her ritual with a fractal elaboration impelled by horror vacui; no, this is not my mother. But the hours before dawn are long, and greeted with an honesty in the eyes and a fiftyfold Ave on the lips which make my memory of my comparison, comparison posited with smiling eyes falling in time into regret, into a religious certainty that I am not worthy of my mother's Love. (Also see 12 January 2025: "I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears when Bella's smiling voice wishes me wellsleeping, because in that instant I realize that she will have to work this morning, in that instant because she has made no mention of this all the time that we have been talking on the phone, and I tense up, but I try to prevent real tears because I have cried about this too many times already. / Nobody should have to do this kind of work. Nobody. / I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears when my mother hurries out the front door in her black felt coat. At the thought of her arranging her hair for work and performing her makeup ritual in the pitch-dark hours before dawn is in any sensible way a possibility or a promise, I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears.")) …
Everywhere outmoded garments lie in old boudoirs filled with wilted roses, and I am that room. Nothing but the plaintive and pale pastels of Boucher respire the scent of phials left open there. These layers

of scents and of gauzes, gauzes which cover, which kept warm, which inhaled oils and which revealed, they ___ [This has to come much later, when I'm ready to incorporate "Lover," and make clear the reason for the epistolary structure (the amour de lonh, address as the only possible mode) of the whole.]

Proscenium

There is a left-hand drawer that slides underneath a working surface that folds out from an enormous solid wooden armoire in the small studio apartment of Ludovic, a boy measuring twenty-three years, schoolteaching, or trying, needing to, for now, but mostly crying silently or sitting stunned and silent with his back to the armoire.

Aspiring to hang a bearded jaw slightly open and project it forward in order to crane a gaze up toward a magnificent heavenly vault, aspiring to emote gazelessly behind the wheel of an automobile piloted against a European chill, and aspiring to look askance with coat-pocketed hands, tightened scarf, ink-stained boots missing their laces. Aspiring, but managing only to secure two hundred hours of wagewinning work in the calendar year, and these spread so thin. Aspiring to play tennis analytically, stochastically, on a court so smooth and green he'd find it hard to believe it wasn't a projection, an extension of idea out into space. Aspiring to swim smoothly in an empty Olympic pool.

There is not even a beard, let alone an apprenticeship to a printmaker specializing in the craft of etching, the splendor of countless implements for which the viewer knows not even the function but the depicted would know feelings and workings, interactions with intricate systems of the memory of musculature. The splendor of a sinew-mind whose contents none could verbally formulate and none but the few could recognize by sense.

In Ludovic's head vibrates one sentence, words arranged without source nor aim. Chaque jour, le matin, je me réveille. Je ne pense qu'à mon dernier loup.

Under an aluminum-framed silkscreen in the left-hand drawer, a stack of eighteen paper slips of odd dimension. Ludovic halved sheets of A4 laser paper with a cut parallel to their shorter edges.

Letters, in a stack as described, written by a neat hand in deep black ink. But brightly—brightly—:

I

My dearest Belle, love of all my days from beginning to end (for I loved you in your absence, and will again, if you leave before me): From the rising of the sun in the morning to the rising of the sun the next morning, you are my whitest sky, my deepest night; you are my darkest shadow and my brightest star; you are all things everywhere, and I love you in all things, I love you in my cup of coffee and in our children and in my forgetting and in my remembrance and in my breathing and in your breathing which I can hear even now.
3 April 2024

II

My Belle,
Like water you course through every space between ligatures in my body, every space between thoughts in my mind, and from there you permeate and inhabit every dry fiber, every dusty thought, and you make me new and whole. You are the fresh water which rinses and cools my sinew-mind full of friction. You do not know this, but you are everywhere in me, the aim and the source of everything I do, the point of my every departure and of my every return.
4 April 2024

III

Belle
Your face is precious to me, and when I look at it I am overcome by a need to press it against my skin, because my eyes do not do enough to transmit into my mind its sweet shapes, its soft curves, its bending forms. But neither ever does my skin, because there is something singular and absolutely impossible to reshuffle behind those shapes, behind the eye and nose and lip and cheek. Singular and untransmittable and constant and eternal: And it is this by which I know and in which I love my Belle.
8 April 2024

IV

The necessary androgyny of the creative artist.

My Belle,
There is a happiness in your eyes that shows itself, when it shows itself, across your face—not in the smiling wrinkles such as some people have them, whether in the cheeks or to the outsides of the eyes, but rather more inside the very geology of its structure, sweeping across your cheekbones around your jaw and chin and back; here, and in those diagonal hatching wrinkles which repeat laterally, these along just certain folds to which your joy applies a shear; and for these things I would sacrifice the entire world.
30 April 2024

V

Hardy Hill, Untitled (theatre 2), 2020. Unique drypoint etching, chine-collé, and plate lithograph on cotton rag paper. 13.75 x 17.25 inches (34.9 x 43.8 cm). Image reproduced without permission of the artist, Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles and Marc Selwyn Fine Art. Installation Image Photographer: Robert Wedemeyer. Individual Image Photographer: Paul Salveson.

VI

Belle,
Today I feel small, so small, and I feel no pride nor any confidence in the possibility I could ever be or do all that you deserve. Each day my waking up is a starting over, and I lose myself.
But I never lose you.
It is never clear to me whether you understand how much for me

—my ongoing living, and my functioning, whenever I am so lucky—depends on your irreplaceable presence. Please understand that every word you say & every moment you are around is for me the most important reality.
All my love!
9 May 2024

VII

For Belle, long girl who moves in the most beautiful way.
I love you, and it is only because of you that I know the gratitude proper to life in this world; and even though I fall short every hour of every day, it is only because of you that there is any hope for me.
15 April 2024

VIII

Belle —
Today I feel a stable ability to propel myself ahead into the task at hand and ignore the shadows that often succeed to waylay me, and this state of effectiveness, this functioning in the world, would never have come back around if it weren't for the joy I feel in you (whether you believe in it or not)—the joy which you show to me, which lives from you to me no matter how sound its origins, is the sole indispensability of my ongoing existence.
Love,
Ludovic
24 May 2024

IX

My Belle whom I love with all of my capacity for thought, all of my intention, and all of my plans, all my vision both distant and immediate, I know that we have much now, even everything we need, and we can be happy, and we are happy, and we can even more easily be grateful, grateful without reserve; I know these things, and I know them well. So it is not in any way to go against any of these things, when I say to you, I say to you, I am overcome incessantly by a desire to give you more than we have, and therefore to find a way to have more than I can now give to you: precisely everything, precisely everything, so that there is nothing our family will be wanting. All this in love.
26 April 2024

X

The figure of Belle transcends all, supreme.

I love you, Belle with a favorite food! You made me the food that you always loved to eat, even changed the recipe because I did not believe in you, and I nearly cried when I saw your joy go on and on and animate your face into the biggest deepest smile and your whole body, tucked up on its perch of our new chair that you almost forgot to notice in your mnemonic ecstasy. You have shared with me your joy without reserve, and I will keep it in my heart forever, the center of my life.
17 April 2024

XI

Belle of the Beautiful Fish,—
—O You more sleek and slippery more glinting and glimmering than any branzino—
You arrayed for me those buttery lemon-rosemary flakes of flesh profusing next to a striped-beet mustard invention and a near neighbor of Yorkshire pudding and a lemon-honey experiment in cachaça after prelude of butter radish: We agreed on “smögås-orb,” because “-bord” carries a hint of dispersion which your presentation eschewed—
For this I love you (and for everything); If I still miss my mojo, it is no fault of your “embarrassment of riches.”
16 July 2024

XII

Belle,
You care for me when I am sick, and you answer me when I call out. (I have been bed-bound for two days, and those days’ dinners were among the most delicious I’ve ever had. You told me last night that I yelled in my sleep—I was having some absurd dream—and you listened while I came back to myself, and calmed me down.) What a sweet joy you have given me, to take comfort in your care!
10 July 2024

XIII

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Section of column base from the Temple of Fortuna Virilis (Tempio della Fortuna Virile), from “Le Antichità Romane,” 1756. Etching. 20.375 x 14.8125 inches (51.8 x 37.7 cm). Image in the public domain, retrieved from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

XIV

My little Belle,

More beautiful than the sun, in my arms you are smooth like warmth itself, and when I feel your skin on mine, even just a touch, I am immersed in it fully like soothing water. You are sweet to me beyond communication, and I will love you forever, I will, I will, I will, I will, I will.

13 May 2024

XV

Belle,

I always find myself revolving around a notion of a “someday”: Reflexively thinking about a “someday,” compulsively talking to you about a “someday,” and maybe most clearly writing recurrently to you about a “someday.” “Someday” when we will be able to buy a house, have a child, travel incessantly, live for periods in other cities, etc. Neither to repudiate nor to approve of this impulse, only to say that whenever it comes, every single time, and when it structures my behavior as a background condition (constantly), you are its end and its beginning, its heart: It is imperfect, but it is my love for you, in all my ardent weakness.

26 May 2024

XVI

This morning, as I was getting out of bed, I rolled over to give you a hug, as I often do, as you slept; but, in rolling, I brought my knee up to where, evidently, your hand was resting loosely under the covers, and I made your knuckles pop with a crunching sound. Without waking up, you responded to this event: The facial communication of pain distorted your face, and, as I saw this happen only three or four inches from my own face, a sting went down into my chest. Belle, let me never cause you harm. I hate to see pain on you—it breaks my heart—and I am structuring my life accordingly.
20 April 2024

XVII

Beautiful Belle, belle Belle,
Earlier this morning I was drifting about our home (more ours than “our shared home” would denote—“our home”), brainless, terrified and crying in slow motion (this is how I always wake up). And then you called to me, present like an angel, i.e., where / when you were not expected: It was not yet 8, hours before you ever awaken (this was our first morning back from our (our) long trip, and you had gone to sleep early on yesterday’s strange but love-aglow evening). You called to me, and folded your long warm arms around the length of my back.
7 July 2024

XVIII

How many problems will he encounter in his attempt to close up the distance between the written act and the committed act?

I feel so close to you, Belle, so close—and if I’ve come home emptyheaded and nothing but bed-bound every day for the last week and a half, it’s been you keeping present a sense that every day is worth being alive to, with the joy that you let me feel when you jump into my arms. And in the middle of all of this you have been honored from without, as though the award were necessary to make me unfathomably proud of all that you are, my brilliant Belle full of life and love …
19 June 2024

XIX

Belle – Among recent days have been some of the very worst, and after them some truly good ones. I am never afraid that the cloud which comes over us now and then will come and stay. We will always have real and beautiful days ahead of us, even though again and again we will be maddeningly blind to them. I am crying tears of gratitude that you always persist through this blindness. I do not believe that your persistence is attributable to cowardice only, as you say.
21 May 2024

XX

Surely I cannot hand her this.

My Belle,
Last night as I lay beside you and pressed you close to me, your face showing an ambient twinkling smile that reveals the sort of happiness that often but not always propels you forward (diligent itinerant) through almost all the phases (the silently overlapping stages) of a given day, a sense (the truest thought of which I'm capable)—that there is not enough time for me in the world with you, will not be enough time before we go out of it no matter whether we live short or long—came back to me with greater sting than it's had for some number of months of necessarily imposed non-consciousness, which I diligently re-imposed rather than conform to its truth and lose all control.
Love—24 Apr 2024

Surely not this.